THE LIGHT OF MEN

M·REYNES MONLAUR

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BY

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BY

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AN OLD-TIME FOREWORD

YOU must not think that all that Jesus actually did or said can ever be fully brought home to the mind or has been fully set forth in writing.

With the hope of arousing interest I mean to tell my story in this little book as though its events were actually going on around us now; and in so doing I am but following the example of many writers who have thus stirred up their readers' imaginations.

As a matter of fact, it is lawful to meditate on Holy Scripture, explain it, and expound it in many ways to suit our convenience, provided we are loyal to its truth and teaching, and do not draw from it lessons contrary to faith and morals.

If, therefore, you are eager to profit greatly herein, place yourselves in the actual

presence of the events themselves, and listen to the very words of the Lord here written down, just as though your very eyes saw and your ears were listening.

Wherefore, I beg of you to receive with joy this little work of mine. . . .

JOHN FIDANZA (*St. Bonaventure*),
1221–1274.

TO THE VIRGIN MARY

TO THE VIRGIN MARY

I

O VIRGIN MOST PURE AMONG WOMEN!

When thy childhood first beheld a refuge from the world for the maidens of Judea, going forth from thy father's house thou didst seek shelter in the shadow of the Temple, placing its sacred rampart between thee and the life of man.

When, according to the custom of thy race, thy parents wished to choose thee a spouse in thy sixteenth year, thou didst lift up an unclouded brow to Jehovah, thy trusted Protector, and, as it has been handed down even to this day, He appointed by a sign the one who was worthy to hold thee in safe keeping.

And when the Lord sent His messenger hailing thee as Mother of God, thou didst but ask: "How shall this be done?" and bowed thy head under the double crown of virginity and motherhood.

And thereafter, bearing thy gentle Infant in thine arms, thou didst come and go in the narrow streets of Jerusalem, a symbol of peace, aloof from all that taints or sullies, seeing thy world in His eyes and thy heaven in His smile.

O VIRGIN MOST PURE AMONG WOMEN!

II

O VIRGIN MOST SILENT AND HUMBLE AMONG WOMEN!

When, after the visit of the Angel, thou didst mingle with thy daily companions, thou didst not boast of the marvels which God had wrought, or hint to any that His Angel had spoken unto thee.

And when, in the alarm of his soul and knowing not the dispensation of God,

Joseph would have driven thee from his home, thou didst not make answer as the Angel of old to thine ancestor Jacob: "Beware how thou strivest against the power of the Most High, for the Lord is with me."

And when, in the after years, Jesus passed through the flowering fields and crowded towns, banishing sorrow as the wind compels before it the dust and the clouds, thou didst not gaze on Him with the eye of pride or proclaim: "Lo! this is the Son of my flesh and my blood."

Even when He hung in bitter agony on the Cross, despised, denied and abandoned by all, thou didst not break silence, but, standing erect beside Him, didst share His shame and mutely offer Him the only earthly gift worthy of His acceptance—thine own virginal maternal love.

O VIRGIN MOST SILENT AND HUMBLE AMONG WOMEN!

III

O VIRGIN MOST COMPASSIONATE AND TENDER AMONG WOMEN!

When, during the long starlit evenings spent on the narrow terrace of thy house, thy Son explained that He was come to take away the sins of the world, thy answering prayer was ever: "Grant that I may lighten the sufferings of mankind."

When He announced that He was come that men might have life, thou didst whisper: "My Son, even for the holy, life is so often a burthen. Grant that I may bring a little joy into the lives of all."

When He spoke, saying: "My Blood is the ransom of their eternal happiness," thy maternal heart did murmur: "Would that my tears might heal their most grievous wounds!"

And when heaven and earth stood expectant of Christ's first miracle, wondering what marvel would first manifest His

omnipotence, moved with tender compassion thou didst speak at the marriage-feast: "They have no wine"; and to the household, humiliated at the disclosure of their poverty, thou didst whisper: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." And behold, a new wine flowed from the jars, and the Angels recounted how, at Mary's prayer, Christ had performed His first miracle to add a zest to innocent joy.

O VIRGIN MOST COMPASSIONATE AND TENDER AMONG WOMEN!

IV

O VIRGIN MOST BLESSED AND BELOVED AMONG WOMEN!

Thou who (in the words of Zacharias) didst "look towards Him" all the days of thy life, and didst never forfeit His blessing, wilt now from the bosom of His light have compassion on those who, through wretchedness and dimness of faith, struggle towards Him as best they

may, yearning to taste of His purity, His strength and His peace.

Have compassion, above all, on those who are still buried in the shadows of death because they recognize not or have forgotten that to "look towards Him" is to find life.

O VIRGIN MOST BLESSED AND BELOVED AMONG WOMEN!

R.M.

THE WIDOW'S MITE

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THE WIDOW'S MITE

I

THE last Alleluia of Vespers had been chanted. On the Altar of Holocausts, that dread altar five cubits in length, the fire of sacrifice was smouldering. The blood of the two lambs, which Israel offered daily to Jehovah at dawn and sundown, had flowed over the altar, and was now trickling drop by drop into the channels that carried it away. To the South, in accordance with the ritual, the hand of the priest had cast on the burning coals of the Altar of Incense that most truly Oriental of perfumes—a compound of nard, attar of roses, cinnamon and amber—which was reserved exclusively for the use of the Temple.

The multitude was slowly dispersing down the terraces which tier on tier led to the open-air temple where tens of thousands might

worship with ease. From the Court of Israel they went through the Women's Court and thence to the Court of the Gentiles, beyond whose doors no pagan might pass save under pain of death; as if Jehovah, the Inaccessible, would hear only from afar all supplications and praise which did not issue from the lips of the Chosen People!

In throngs the faithful moved past the thirteen trumpet-shaped boxes, the *Shofarim,* into which the silver and gold fell with a clang. Each according to his generosity or his means put in his offering. The more wealthy Jews gave ostentatiously precious coins bearing Cæsar's effigy, thus lending an added note of splendor to the festival. These offerings of the rich were in harmony with the sheen of the marbles, the glitter of the golden ornaments, the rare mosaics, and all the luxury which became more striking and more defined the nearer one approached to Jehovah, until it blazed in the massive jewel-encrusted plates and veils of byssus and purple that adorned the threshold of the Holy of Holies.

In the very heart of this glorious Temple,

Jesus, pursuing His truceless war against hypocrisy, was denouncing the Scribes and Pharisees to the listening people.

"Beware of those who love salutations in the public places, the first seats in the synagogues, the first places at feasts, and who devour the houses of widows, making a show of long prayers."

He spoke, heedless of the hatred of the Scribes around Him. And then, as if wearied by the struggle, He seated Himself in the shadow of the Gate Beautiful with its panels of bronze, noting those who passed by and those who gave. His thoughtful gaze rested on haughty brows, read the mean thoughts of calculating minds, and fathomed hearts which formalism had dried up and in which evil had turned to bane the holiest precepts of the Law.

One by one the hypocrites of whom He had just spoken passed before that inscrutable look, carrying their own heads high while crushing the trembling shoulders of their brethren under burdens too heavy to bear. Effeminate epicures also hastened by to shameful banquets where remote provinces,

rivers and seas paid tribute in fresh novelties to jaded appetites. Before Him they passed, "whited sepulchres," carefully avoiding the path used by the multitude, and choosing a separate passage of cut stone leading from the Temple. All the leaders of Israel passed by, and then followed all the priests, Samuel and Elzear, those of the houses of Kantheros and Phabi, Hanan and Caiphas,—Caiphas the High Priest, and on him the Son of Man rested His gaze longer than on the others.

And the look of Christ was neither scornful nor disdainful. Irony, "that smoke of narrow hearts," had no place in His soul. Instead, a nameless anguish dimmed His pensive eyes, and a veil of agony spread over His countenance: it was for such as these that, in three days, He was to die. . . .

Suddenly a royal sweetness lit up the Master's face, as on a foggy day a ray of sunshine shoots through the heavy clouds. A veiled woman was approaching timidly, and as if ashamed of finding herself in the midst of the wealthy, for she was poor. She had the self-effacing mien of one who believes

she is utterly unprotected and unloved because she is a widow. And her two great sorrows, poverty and heart-loneliness, she bore very simply, as if her lot were most natural since the Lord had willed it.

She stretched her hand towards the box nearest to her, and humbly cast in her offering—two mites, hardly half a cent. Into the box with her offering fell a handful of gold, flung carelessly from afar by Samuel ben Phadi. A passing blush suffused the countenance of the widow, and in her heart she murmured to the Lord: "Forgive me, I have only that to offer."

She had not noticed Him whose look followed her all the while, nor did she hear Him say to His disciples, as He pointed towards her approvingly: "She hath cast in more than they all; she of her want hath cast in all that she had." Moreover, she was unaware of the blessing which consecrated her, poor ignorant widow though she was, in the midst of that group of the wise and learned.

Why did He not speak to her? It would have been so easy for Him to speak! Why did He allow her to depart on her way with-

out a word to lighten the burden of her soul? And why did He, the Master of eternal secrets, not wish to reveal the mystery of this gift?

But this very silence was a pledge of reward beyond price. And who knows but that our hours of choicest blessing are those in which a heroic sacrifice leaves the soul heavy and desolate?

II

Truly, she had performed a heroic act. She had given all that she had. She hurried back to her humble abode, far from the marble homes of the rich, far from the new quarter of the town, with its baths, its games, and that rose garden which at every season wafted the breath of Spring over Jerusalem the Fair.

In the heart of that unmapped region which the new walls of the city enclosed, somewhat removed from all other buildings, stood a little single-storey house. The widow entered hastily; she was coming home, not to cheer, but to increase the solitary desolation of her only daughter, Rachel, who was blind

as the result of one of those maladies so frequent under the Oriental sun. The mother and daughter lived alone, except for the occasional presence in the evening of an orphan boy whom the widow had adopted.

He was her sister's son and tended a flock at some distance. He was teaching the young girl to weave baskets, and was unremittingly patient in guiding the fingers of the blind girl. But their poverty was so great that the work of the mother and of the children scarcely sufficed to win their daily bread.

They were resigned to their lot; but now and again, as she grew up, Rachel was subject to fits of violent desolation, feeling with despair the call of joy and of life—of that life which others lived and from which eternal night excluded her. It was during one of these fits of anguish of her child that Sarah the widow had gone up to the Temple on this spring-laden evening of Nisan; and to obtain a little strength, to win by a sacrifice the pity of the Lord, she had offered of her penury "all that she had."

The journey from the Temple to her dwell-

ing was long. Joël, the young shepherd, had arrived a little before her, and was speaking eagerly to Rachel, who no longer wept:

"Here are some wild figs and a little milk," he was saying; "and here, take in your arms all the flowers I have gathered, the ones you like best. Why were you weeping? Perhaps you have been alone too long? But soon we shall leave each other no more. I will marry you when I am big enough to support you. I will take you to the fields with me; while I watch my sheep, you will tell me pretty stories, and we shall be so happy!"

"What would you do with a blind wife, Joël?" interrupted the sad voice. "You are so gentle, you would never complain. . . . But I should grieve to think of your trouble. I could do nothing, could aid you in nothing. Everyone would laugh at you. You remember how the children laughed the other day when we took a walk and I stumbled over the stone?"

"They did not laugh at you," said Joël passionately, "or I would immediately have resented it."

"It was at me," resumed the blind girl;

"and it did not hurt so much because it was at me alone. But if I were your wife, it would have broken my heart, and I should never again dare to go out with you. I should think: 'What must he feel while they are ridiculing me? He is ashamed of me, perhaps!' I should be even more unhappy than now. You do not realize how deeply things affect one when one does not see! There is nothing to distract one's thoughts. And you also would suffer; I should make you suffer without wishing it, because every day I should ask you if you had no regrets."

"You would no longer ask me when you knew me well, Rachel. It is because I do not know how to speak to you that you say such bitter words. I am clumsy, heavy, and slow-witted. But for all that there is something within me that sings. You put light into my soul. When I want to be happy down there in the fields during the long nights or during the long days, I do not look at the stars, or the sky, or the tall grass bending before the wind, or my sheep or anything. I close my eyes, and within me I look at you. I see you walk and smile; I see your way of

wrapping yourself in your veil and of bending your head when you listen to me—and that is for me a great pleasure. Sometimes I am wicked. I think that, beautiful as you are, you would love others if you could see how ugly and miserable I am; and I am happy that you have not been cured so that you may think well of me."

Humbly he repeated: "Yes, I am wicked."

Groping, she felt for the brown hand of the shepherd and held it in her own.

Sarah smiled at the children and kissed Rachel. Joël continued to speak, without awaking from his dream; like all timid souls, once he had dared to open his heart, he poured out its fullness in a mighty torrent.

"I want to be good, however. I have wished it especially for the last few days. Near to the place where I tend my flock, in the neighborhood of Bethany, a man often comes to seat himself with some others around him. He must be a prophet, I think; the words he speaks are so beautiful. He does not know that I hear him, as I hide in the ditch behind the long grass. There I

remain for hours and hours when he is there, and long after he has departed.

"Often he speaks of the poor like us, saying that he loves them and that one day he will make them happy. He says that we are his sheep, that he calls us, that he knows us, and that we know him. I have never dared to show myself, you understand; I don't even know how to read. But if you were to come to-morrow? I am sure that afterwards you would weep no more. I don't know why, but, only to hear his voice, one would say that nothing mattered. It no longer hurts me that sometimes we lack bread; and I believe that you would never again grieve because you do not see."

"You will bring us; we shall go, shall we not, Mother?" said Rachel, who appeared to hang on the words of the boy. "I shall not speak to him either. You must have misunderstood him when you think that he loves us. The masters do not love the poor. But he shall not drive us away since he shall not see us; and if he has words for those who suffer—"

"He has words for everything," replied

Joël, with assurance. "One has only to say: 'Lord do that,' and he does it. This very morning his companions were questioning him—concerning a withered tree, I believe. I did not quite understand: it must have had to do with times long ago. He answered them that with a little faith they could obtain everything; that they had only to ask, and he would give it to them."

"Oh!" murmured Rachel, "can he have such a power? Can he do everything! What if I were to go and to ask him—"

She did not dare to finish, trembling at the audacity of her thought. But Joël understood without her finishing the sentence, and, fearing disappointment, added sadly:

"He did not speak of curing."

"No matter, since he said *everything*," she replied.

"What nonsense!" said the mother uneasily. "You know that Joël always lives half in a dream. He cannot have understood; he speaks foolish things. Who would dare to speak in this fashion? Our prophets themselves would not have had such audacity. Has a man the power of Jehovah?"

Sarah made a sign of displeasure to the shepherd, who hung down his head, feeling himself at fault. She spoke for a long time describing her visit to the Temple, but Rachel was not listening. When one has opened the cage, how can one retain the bird? The blind girl kept repeating: "We shall go, we shall go, Mother." With impatience and anguish, the mother had to promise that they would think over the matter, and finally that they would go. The evening then passed rapidly in spite of the misery and of the hard bread for the supper. Something winged was hovering in the dwelling; there were smiles on their faces, they breathed more freely, for they felt in their hearts the silent step of hope.

III

Dawn found the two children and the mother on the way to Bethany. The freshness of the early hours took possession of them and calmed the fever of their expectations and hopes, which, though but half-formed, were as agonizing as a burn. The

road led up the slopes of the Garden of Olives, and down into the valley beyond, where the bluish shadow of night was paling into the softness of dawn. Marvelous tints of the tenderest green faded on the horizon, grew whiter each moment, and were anon caught up with a faint tinge of gold. Suddenly the virgin light of morn burst forth resplendent in that Oriental sky to the accompaniment of the songs of the birds and the gentle rustlings of the lofty palms. Rachel stretched forth her hands towards the first rays of the sun to secure her part in the joys of earth.

Joël was moving hither and thither, impatient in his haste to arrive at their destination, driving before him his little flock. Yes, this was the spot! Yonder behold the fig-tree, withered and dead amid the verdure of Spring! But will the Master come to-day? Will he follow the same path? Seized with an inexplicable anguish, Rachel wished now to withdraw, and said to her young companion:

"Let us hide where you hid yourself, so as to be sure that he shall not see us. I am

so afraid he may send us away! Listen, we shall speak to him only if I think like you that he is good. . . . If I say nothing, I beg of you, don't speak either. . . . I have been foolish. . . . I am afraid now; it seems to me that it is getting cold."

Sarah tried to speak; she pretended to attach little importance to their journey, saying that they had come out of a very natural curiosity, that they would return without waiting if he delayed too long. But her voice was changed, hoarse, and almost stifled with emotion. An involuntary hope had taken possession of her heart, and with hope the terror of possible disappointment. Silently she prayed that the Lord would dispel every foolish desire, every wish contrary to His ways. Almost mechanically she repeated: "May the prophet not pass this way if he is to leave behind him but an added grief!"

The Prophet did pass this way.

Joël saw Him afar off, surrounded by His disciples, and said in a troubled voice:

"It is he."

"Keep silent," Rachel implored. "Say nothing, and ask no questions."

She trembled in every limb and became as white as a ghost. Joël crouched at her feet in the ditch behind the tree, and all waited.

The Master, grave and sorrowful, was advancing along the road. He was quite near them now. He was about to pass. He was passing.

"Master," said one of the disciples, "behold this fig-tree which Thou didst curse; lo! it has withered."

The calm voice of Jesus of Nazareth replied. Joël had spoken truly; that voice gripped the soul, and penetrated to unknown depths. At His first words Rachel instinctively drew nearer. The Lord was saying:

"Have faith in God."

And stretching His hand towards the Mount of Olives, whose giant cedars stood out in sombre profile against the light, He continued:

"Whosoever shall say to yonder mountain: 'Take up and cast thyself into the sea,' and shall not hesitate in his heart, but shall believe that all he sayeth shall be done, it shall verily be done."

Joël raised his eyes, not knowing if he

were dreaming, awaiting a sign. Rachel had arisen, and stretched forward her poor face in ardent supplication. The Lord continued:

"Whatsoever thou shalt ask, believe that thou shalt obtain it, and it shall happen to thee."

Carried away by the irresistible transport of her love, the mother had cast herself at the feet of the Master on the edge of the road. She spoke no word, but with her joined hands pointed out to the Lord her blind child, daring to express neither her prayer nor her hope, lest she should break that fragile being, *if the Lord were not willing*.

Oh! the sweetness of the look which Jesus of Nazareth directed towards the child and towards the mother! Joël joyously whispered: "He has seen you!"

Very gently the Lord laid His hand on the closed eyes of the blind girl, and at His touch Rachel ceased to tremble, while an ecstasy transfigured her countenance. She waited motionless, as she felt the very joy of God take possession of her.

The voice of the Master rose omnipotent:

"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

She answered:

"I believe."

An instant longer the divine hand rested on her pure countenance. Together with the joy of God, faith, resignation and love seemed to take wing in Rachel like a flight of birds. And she thought that she would gladly remain blind, in that ecstasy of joy, all her life, if she only might have ever on her face, between her and the light of this world, that hand which lighted within her the light that was eternal.

But she was not to remain blind. The Saviour wished to pluck along His path the flower of their joy. He withdrew His omnipotent hand, and the limpid eyes of Rachel were fixed on Him, the ineffable vision of beauty and goodness. And even then Christ did not say to the mother: "I saw you yesterday." Nor did He say to the child: "I am paying back your mother's offering."

Only when He had gone on a little distance, John, the well-beloved,—looking back towards the radiant group, hearing the in-

coherent blessings which the widow was murmuring, and seeing Joël running towards the Master with his finest lamb in his arms, and Rachel lost in ecstasy, unable to withdraw her gaze from the departing Saviour,—accustomed as he was to these spectacles, John the well-beloved disciple asked:

"What have these done that they should meet Thee on their road?"

Pointing to the widow, Jesus answered:

"She has given me of her want all that she had."

ALCÆUS

ALCÆUS

I

ALCÆUS, the Greek, was lounging in the shade of the cedars on the Mount of Olives and looking down on the city of Jerusalem. He had resided in the city now some weeks, frequenting the schools of its famous masters as he had already attended those of Athens and Alexandria. His purpose was indeed less to learn wisdom than to seek in these lectures a more perfect form of beauty. At first he had been apprehensive of hearing in Jerusalem a less refined philosophy, a doctrine narrow and terrifying. Dogmatic assertions and violent anathemas repelled him. The human intelligence appeared to him too limited to attain certainty, and life too sweet to introduce into it the sombre problems of the beyond. His sole dogma was beauty. He was accustomed to say that, under what-

soever form beauty might appear, he would worship it.

His passion for beauty extended to the smallest things—to their appearances and surroundings. He could not disentangle himself from petty circumstances. A truth was dearer to him because he had heard it at the foot of the Parthenon under the clear sky of Athens, while the sun was shining through the pure lines of the columns, and goats were browsing around the mighty temple, and a shepherd, beautiful as a statue by Phidias, was extracting from a rustic reed the simple notes of an ancient song.

On the other hand, certain lessons always reverted to his mind with repugnance, and as if against his will—as, for instance, that whole passage of Plato dealing with the persecuted just man. It was on a gray evening that his master had first commented on this passage for him. Master and pupil were returning to Corinth through mean suburbs, where coopers were fixing the hoops on their barrels and the strokes of their hammers made a resounding din. Ever afterwards that beautiful passage presented itself to

Alcæus under a forbidding aspect. This lover of life hated all that savored of unpleasantness, ingratitude and death.

At Jerusalem Gamaliel, the eloquent and proud, was then lecturing under marble porticos that rose in the air a hundred cubits. His sentences, rare in their eloquence, were as intoxicating as the wine of Galaad. Hanging on his words, the Greek took a delight in tracing link by link the golden chain that bound the listening throng to the ancient God of whom Gamaliel spoke. Alcæus, however, held such Jewish "fables" lightly. He learned from them only that wisdom should not be studied apart from beauty; for, to his pagan mind, wisdom was perishable but beauty eternal. Instinctively, however, in spite of his pagan upbringing, he had a taste for the pure in life.

Leaning on his elbows and supporting his head with his hands, Alcæus was gazing on Jerusalem the Fair with the joy of an artist. It was a glorious spring noon just two days before the Pasch. The heat, already very oppressive, had driven the Greek to seek a refuge under the cedars where the doves

sported among the roses and the palms. The sun blazed around his retreat, and its fierce rays were thrown back by the granite rocks, while the air above this arid land was laden with strong perfumes of cinnamon and incense. The Greek crushed some aromatic leaves between his hands; and, in the radiant brightness of that torrid and perfumed air, an immense joy took possession of him. With eyes half closed and lips slightly parted, it seemed to him as if he inhaled life itself—so ardent and sweet!—with every breath he breathed. Away below him lay the cluster of domes, of jasper and marble,—a white picture against the background of the red-tinted hills. Away below him lay the terraces of the Temple, rising up tier on tier against the distant blues of Ebal and forming a fit complement of his dream of beauty and of pride.

Alcæus for a long time gave himself up to the intoxication of this dream. Then the sound of many footsteps recalled him to himself. He raised his head. Some peasants—no doubt one of these innumerable caravans which were obstructing the approaches to

Jerusalem on the eve of the Pasch—were passing along the road below him. It had amused him to watch the meanderings of the long files as they descended from all the hills along the narrow roadways. Men and animals were mingled in joyous confusion: lambs for the sacrifices; camels with lazy gait, bending beneath their burdens; tottering old men leading three generations in this annual migration to the Holy City; veiled statuesque women carrying on their heads jars and baskets of flowers and of fruits.

But the men whose steps he now heard were, on the contrary, coming from Jerusalem. They spoke a rude dialect and had no women with them. To the great annoyance of the Greek, they halted at a little distance, robbing him of his solitude, his perfumes and his shade. Alcæus resolved to ignore their presence. He let his head fall once more on his hands, and resumed his interrupted contemplation.

II

In spite of himself, fragments of their conversation continued to reach him. To his

great astonishment he soon became aware that these plain men were disciples, and one of them a rabbi. A rabbi! this peasant! Alcæus smiled, amused at the chance which brought him in contact with the ideas and with the lessons of these poor people. Truly the Orient was full of strange surprises!

The disciples were asking questions, but the answers of their companion reached the Greek only in fragments. Soon, however, Alcæus rose curious to see the Master, so gripping and profound were his words. He could not distinguish his features, but only a white robe and long hair. The Master was facing towards Jerusalem, still bathed in its halo of light. The disciples, like him, were also gazing at the Temple.

"Tell us when shall these things be?" asked one of them. "What sign shall there be of thy coming?"

The Master answered:

"As lightning cometh out of the East, and appeareth even into the West, so also shall be the coming of the Son of Man."

What! Was this man, did he believe himself to be, a prophet? Alcæus had indeed

heard of judges, of kings, of prophets in this strange land, but always as men dead long ago. No one had hinted that any such still existed. Often had the Greek desired to see one of these men whose folly led them to commune with the invisible, and who must surely have gained from that imaginary or real contact with the beyond an unbounded nobility. A sort of superstition—certainly, not the smallest particle of faith—led him to consider these men as something superhuman. He drew nearer, until the spreading branches of the cedars formed a shady retreat where he could neither see nor be seen. He could now hear the voice speaking with a calm assurance things unparalleled: That Jerusalem would be compassed about with enemies, invested and destroyed; that of this marvelous Temple there would not be left a stone upon a stone; that from the beginning of time there had never been such tribulation.

And then came terrifying predictions of the days to follow: troubles in the stars; men withering away for fear at the roaring of the sea; sinners aghast, crying: "Moun-

tains, fall upon us; hills, cover us." Then would appear in the heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and there would be distress among all the tribes of the earth. And they would see the Son of Man coming in the clouds. . . .

What! Was this magnificent picture, drawn by invisible lips, meant only for a few peasants? and who was he that spoke, and called himself the Son of Man? What a strange name! Alcæus, glued to the spot in his amazement, did not know if he were dreaming. He tried to shake off his dejection, to laugh at himself, to treat himself as a fool for listening to such things. But his calm was only a pretence, and the fragrant leaves fell from his trembling hands.

The terrifying words were mingled with others of divine sweetness. He would protect his own—*he,* this unknown man, this pauper! Under his protection not a hair of theirs would perish. For his name's sake and for his love his companions and all who would believe in him would be dragged before the judges of the earth. And there he would place upon their lips the words that

they should say. The same voice, vibrant and low, went on:

"They shall deliver you up, they shall put you to death. You shall be hated by all men for my name's sake."

None of his companions offered a protest; none considered his demands exorbitant or impossible. As for himself, they would seize him, *they would deliver him up, and within two days he would be crucified.* This statement was certainly clear and unequivocal. Alcæus arose; he must see this man who predicted his mode of punishment and his death on the second succeeding day with such appalling tranquillity. He murmured to himself:

"I must see him."

He jumped up suddenly, and the doves flew away in startled flight. Then he paused in fright at the noise he had made. The speaker however did not turn his head.

The Son of Man was now naming those who could face his judgment and behold his countenance—the pure, the unworldly, and those who have pity on the poor, the hungry and the suffering. Whatever men would do

unto these, they would do unto him. What was he talking about? Alcæus did not even know if poverty existed! But the voice hurled its anathema against those who knew not:

"Depart from me, ye accursed!"

At the sound of that avenging voice, Alcæus tottered like a drunken man. This rabbi, without mentioning his name, was cursing him! At any other time he would have smiled; but one could not smile under the curse of a man who predicts his own death, who faces it more calmly than did Socrates, and who searches the human heart as if it were his proper domain. It seemed to Alcæus that all the brightness around him was changing into darkness; and, not daring to brave the face of the rabbi, he drew away and went down towards Jerusalem. As he walked, oppressed and for the first time feeling the weight of doubt, he grew irritated with himself, and his old critical and sceptical spirit ridiculed the new soul that was springing up within him like a fountain. He thought: "Why, I have only to see him to realize the absurdity of what he said! This

man is simply a fool! Within two days I shall know that he lied—on the day on which he thinks he is going to be put to death."

But if he had not lied?

Ashamed of himself, Alcæus suddenly turned back on reaching the marble ramparts, and retraced his way up the hill. Like a child who fears a ghost and is forced to go and examine the object of his terror as a cure for his alarms, Alcæus took into his hands his trembling soul, determined to confront it with this formidable man.

The man and his companions were no longer there.

III

Then, in a sort of triumph and filled with rage at his own weakness, he resolved to convince himself that he cared nothing for the "Son of Man" and the things he said. To emphasize his indifference, he repulsed with harsh words the wretches who begged at the city gate. He ordered a splendid feast, and summoned to it his boon companions and the famous dancing girls lighter than garlands of Sharon roses swaying in the

wind of the desert. Throughout the night he drank the wine of En-Gaddi and the strong wine of Tyre, which was preserved in ice-cold leathern bottles.

But an anguish mounted within him, begotten of disgust, of terror, and of a passionate if hidden regret. Having heard those glorious words, all else appeared to this lover of beauty sordid and mean. Through the half-open lattice came the plaint of a pauper. He heard it, and, stupid with drink, sought in the recesses of his soul what distant, sacred message it brought him. Stealthily he approached the window, and threw his golden, opal-embossed cup to the unfortunate in the street. He recovered his peace of mind somewhat after this demented action, and murmured:

"It is to thee that I give it."

A busy day followed; then came night in which his sleep was troubled with wild dreams; and then a dawn gray and drab—grayer and more mournful than usual in these burning lands. Alcæus wandered about haphazard and restless, not knowing whither he went. During those two days he lived with

only one thought, to find the Prophet *who was to die to-day*. The town was thronged with strangers, as the feast of the Pasch usually attracted an enormous concourse of pilgrims. How was he to discover one man in the midst of a million, when he did not even know his face! The streets were strewn with flowering branches; tents, which afforded but a slight shelter against the chill of night, obstructed the public squares, the broad Xystus, and even that Roman quarter in which stood the hippodromes, the theatres and the circuses, and in which Alcæus lived. He thought:

"If only I might hear his voice! I should recognize it at once and anywhere! I should then go—"

Affected by a strange bashfulness, he would not question anybody. Besides, the Jewish world was a closed book to him: in Jerusalem he lived among the pagans and "the accursed" for whom the Doctors of the Law felt they had not sufficient anathemas. His sole point of contact with Israel was the public lectures of the great masters; and on feast-days there were no lectures.

He wandered from place to place, avoiding faces he knew. Fair Hyacinth of the large amber eyes came towards him with a laugh, her arms laden with anemones and narcissi. He looked at her with indifference. She knew that look. She knew she must expect it sooner or later in the inconstant eye of men. But that he—and so soon! She went her way indolent and haughty; and he looked after her as though with her went his youth. He thought within himself:

"She hates me already—for his name's sake."

No, she did not hate him. She was weeping. The Greek did not see these tears, and they might perhaps have left him indifferent. His soul, buffeted by contrary winds, seemed to be torn from its moorings and as if dead to things which, yesterday even, furnished a reason for living.

Pagan as he was, he thought of going up to the Temple. The sacrifices had begun at midnight. They went on almost uninterruptedly throughout the great week, but the poor generally chose the less crowded hours. Now the disciples of this man were poor, and

there was some chance of finding them making preparations for the sacrifice on the eve of the Sabbath. Alcæus entered within the bronze doors; he wandered into the Court of the Gentiles, now almost deserted, and scrutinized the groups entering and departing. He looked down on the Holy City. The white cubes of the buildings with their narrow windows, the bronze domes, the roof terraces, the innumerable synagogues and schools were once more bathed in the shimmering vapors. The villas of the Greek colony adorned with the pink bays slumbered in the sound of fountains of murmuring waters.

Alcæus waited long, and waited in vain. Why remain longer? Wherefore set his heart on an impossible quest? Suppose the unknown Master had been arrested? But no one had spoken of an execution in this pleasure-seeking world, so fond of cruelty. Then, it was all a fraud; the man's predictions were but foolish delusions. He must give up this ridiculous and wearisome quest. Still hesitating, he directed his steps towards the Royal Bridge, crossed the Xystus, and

returned to his dwelling after his long vigil. Lysias, Erastus, Eunoë and Hyacinth were crossing the great square, and with outcries of joy surrounded their friend, despite his movement to escape. They had sought him since the previous evening, uneasy at his strange behavior and at his strange disappearance for two days. He answered haphazard, endeavoring to be rid of their company. Hyacinth looked at him intently; her woman's instinct warned her that he was going through some mysterious crisis; and womanlike, knowing that when a man suffers, even if he no longer loves, he has yet need of love, she pressed his arm caressingly. He made an effort to regain control of himself, and went a few steps with them, broken in spirit, no longer knowing what he wished or what he expected.

Their steps led them past the palace of the High Priest, which was now open. Within the courtyard men caught by the chill of night were warming themselves around great fires. There was a crowd going and coming on the staircase that led to the council chamber. The Greeks halted in

amazement. Was it customary for the Jewish priests to sit in judgment before sunrise? The crowd within were laughing, and shouting coarse phrases. The sound of voices, and especially the shrill voice of Caiphas, came from the *Gazith,*[1] whenever the portière was raised as some one entered. Alcæus and his companions were about to proceed on their way with the indifference of the Greek for the Jew, when through the portière, which some one had forgotten to close, a sentence was borne above their heads and lost itself in the desolate sky:

"You shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven."

Alcæus halted. Around him the clamor arose:

"He hath blasphemed. He shall die. What further need have we of witnesses?"

Laughter and shouts issued from the hall of judgment; dull blows and curses were heard. . . . The other Greeks stopped instinctively. The change in the expression of Alcæus was terrible. His companions questioned the people who were warming them-

[1] The court of justice.

selves, and were answered that judgment was being passed on a Galilean who believed himself the Messias and had blasphemed, calling himself the Son of God. He was about to be led before Pilate, who alone in Jerusalem, as the representative of Rome, had the power of life and death. The *blasé* Greeks waited, so unusual were these words. Had such things been ever heard under the Athenian sky? Alcæus violently withdrew his arm from that of Hyacinth. He tried to go on alone and get farther away. But no human force could make him leave the square through which was to pass *he* for whom he had waited—*he* whom he had sought with anguish for days and for nights. Lysias, his dearest friend, bent affectionately towards him:

"Do you know this man, that you should be so concerned? But that is impossible. Do you not understand that this is a Galilean on whom judgment has been passed—a fool who believes himself their Messias?"

He answered:

"It is he. It is indeed he. He foretold it, and in these very terms. He is to die to-day."

Lysias listened to him with compassion, thinking he was mad.

The wait was long. Curses were heard and vile insults, and the mocking shout:

"Prophesy unto us!"

The rabble bore down on the martyr, and the thuds of the blows and the cries of hatred were heard through the lattice of the closed hall. The Greeks whispered together in disgust at these cruel, servile Orientals. The Jews redoubled their insults. Alcæus's brain was in a whirl. Where had he once before heard this hateful noise? Ah! the coopers in Corinth! Plato's dream of the martyrdom of the just man! What repugnance he had felt at the sordid surroundings, but how cold and far-off and dead that feeling now was! What new and pure revelation of beauty had come to him that he should thus dissociate it from the form under which he had hitherto worshipped it, that he should seek it so eagerly in the midst of this crowd and in the horror of tortures?

At last the crowd drew aside. One by one the priests came down the marble staircase, followed by the servants, the guard, and the

executioners. And he—the man clad in white, whose countenance spoke of sweetness and of life—followed in all his sorrowful majesty.

From below, Alcæus stretched his arms towards him.

Lysias whispered:

"He is mad!"

The others drew aside, mute with astonishment. But a woman's sob rent the air, and was lost in the noise of the crowd. Hyacinth understood that this superhuman being was sweeping away in his light the man whom she loved.

The procession moved very slowly, the curious mob retarding its progress. The Christ was advancing with closed eyes amid the curses of His people. When He was near, Alcæus fixed on Him a last look, and the trouble of his soul was stilled, as once on a stormy day had been stilled the waters of the Lake of Genasereth. His former soul died within him as he thought of the words which it had been wont to say to him:

"If ever I should meet beauty, I should adore it."

It used to speak these words to him with quite another meaning; but he had now met a beauty which he had not suspected—beauty invisible, immaterial and sacred—and he abandoned himself to it. Nothing more remained in him of pride or horror at his surroundings. He wanted to approach Jesus; he wished to enter into communion with His soul, to be as closely as possible associated with Him—even in His shame! There was no longer in the world for him anything but the Son of Man. He did not find words to say these things to himself. But again what matter? He *knew* that He who was advancing read these things in him. And, as a breach with his past, with his boon companions and with these women, as well as for the joy of professing his belief, at the first opening of the crowd he forced a passage between the guards, threw himself towards Him in a passionate movement of adoration, and began kissing His blessed hands and feet.

THE TEMPLE IN THE EVENING

THE TEMPLE IN THE EVENING

I

The chief priests also mocked Him with the scribes and elders.

Matt., xxvii, 41.

THE priests were coming down from the Holy Mount.

For many a long hour Christ's martyrdom of blood and of shame had been prolonged. The chief priests, the Pharisees and the Scribes had not once relaxed their grip on their prey since His trial before Caiphas. They had mingled with the crowd—distantly at first before Pilate, but then quite freely around the Cross, where they lifted up their spiteful countenances, watching His last shudder in hope of some sign of weakness while multiplying their insults.

They were not satisfied with the tortures of His scourging, with His torn feet and

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hands, or His thorn-crowned forehead. The stench of their insults mounted upwards to the Dying Christ and enveloped Him in a cloud of infamy. The chief priests of Israel were now getting even for the silence they had had to observe when the young Prophet stirred up the people, and drew after His footsteps even the disciples of their most illustrious teachers. He was a power then! Now that He was dying, now that He called to His aid the God who apparently abandoned Him, they might without alarm enjoy His agony and add to its bitterness.

The "chief priests" were there in numbers. The Gospel does not name them, and this silence is itself a lesson. The crime does not rest solely on such and such a contemporary of Christ: Jochanan or Josuah, Issachar or Caiphas, Amanael, Joazar, or the others whose names the Talmud or Josephus has transmitted to us. The crime rests on the whole of that famous body indicated in the Gospel by the words: "the chief priests of Israel."

They were there. Why? It is true that sensitiveness towards suffering was not one

of their virtues. In order that we might learn the hallowed lesson of respect for grief and respect for death, it was necessary that Christ should come and teach us. And what a length of time it has taken for these virtues to mould our morals and our laws, so foreign were they to our nature! In the downtrodden East, and even in proud Rome, human life was held cheap. Suffering, however atrocious, was a matter of no concern. A few noble women alone, and only in Jerusalem, were accustomed to prepare narcotics to stupefy the condemned when death was at hand: such was the wine of aloes and myrrh that Christ declined to drink. But for the most part men and women crowded to these spectacles as to games; and it is well known that, when the populace after a long interval of calm clamored for some violent diversion, they were offered crucifixions, burnings at the stake, tortures, and slaves exposed to wild beasts in the arena.

This callousness of character was shown towards every form of sorrow, disgrace and weakness. There was no mercy for the conquered, for sinners, slaves, or the poor, or

for all that unlettered crowd known to the rabbis as "the accursed." Save in rare cases, pity was unknown to the ancient world; and He who was the first to proclaim its mysterious consoling teaching was now expiating this "scandal" on the Cross.

Insensibility—cruelty even—was thus inevitable on Calvary. But wherefore so much hate? Why such insults and mockeries drawn out for hours? "They that passed by, blasphemed Him, wagging their heads." They blasphemed Him, but they passed by. The others—the chief priests, the Scribes, the Pharisees—insulted and remained. Their hatred—faithful as love, even more faithful than love frequently is—hounded their victim even to death. Many others had indeed been crucified previously, but they had at least been allowed to die in peace. Why so much fury against Him?

First of all, it was the revenge of the chief priests upon the Prophet. He had dared to attack the Chosen People. He had denounced the crimes of an unworthy priesthood. The noise of the whips driving the sellers from the Temple was still fresh in

men's ears, and His burning invectives had not been forgotten:

"Woe to you, hypocrites, who devour the houses of widows, and who for a show make long prayers!

"Woe to you who shut the kingdom of heaven against men!

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, whited sepulchres!

"Woe to you, blind leaders of the blind!"

But the Reformer had not conquered their hypocrisy, their avarice or their pride. The woe with which He had threatened them had not befallen them. In their prudence they had circumvented it, and it had recoiled entirely upon Himself. His condemnation was the work of the chief priests, and they rejoiced in their work. What a lesson for the ignorant crowd, so prone to enthusiasm! Henceforth, cowering and servile, it would cringe still more before them.

Moreover, it was the instinct of the vulgar to lower and degrade and vilify everything superior to themselves. This Jesus, while He passed on His way radiant and gentle,

asked nothing for Himself, so that the chief priests and Pharisees confusedly felt Him high above them all. What! higher than Issachar the just? Higher than Caiphas the High Priest? No! No! That was all a mistake; they had the proof of it now, and they rejoiced at it. He was no longer above them —He who had made Himself equal to sinners, and "welcomed them and ate with them"; He who had said of "the accursed," the publicans and public sinners, that "they will precede you in the Kingdom of Heaven." What a scandal, and what folly! With what delight the chief priests beheld this innovator —now in his true place, no longer having even the appearance of a man,—reviled and mocked not alone by them but also by the mob whom the masters almost thought it unclean to touch.

Hypocrisy, meanness and fear were having their revenge, and these were at the root of the savage hatred. A mystery hovered about this Being. Can it be that, so great were their obstinacy and blind pride, these priests never trembled under the shadow of the miraculous? Did they behold unaston-

ished the lame walk and the blind see? Did they feel no dismay when by a single word He cured of his disease that paralytic who had lain on his couch for thirty-eight years near one of the *piscinæ* of the Temple, and whom they had seen there daily? Were they not frozen with dread when, hardly a week before, at the word of this Christ, Lazarus already rotting in his tomb arose and walked, his eyes still lost in the great shadow land beyond?

They had indeed said: "This man practises sorcery." But who amongst them had ever raised a dead man by sorcery? At the rumor of the arrest of Jesus many had trembled. Before Caiphas many had stood up when He asserted: "I am the Son of God"; they had covered their faces, but with the terror of feeling through the veil of their garments, through even the impenetrable veil of their flesh, that calm look entering their hearts, descending to their very souls, and changing them from accusers to accused. Despite their outcry they had shivered like criminals, but He had remained calm as a judge.

Some, even as they stood there under the Cross, were but half reassured. Suppose He escaped their hands as He had formerly done on the threshold of the Temple? But gradually they became emboldened, as the life ebbed slowly away from their Victim, drop by drop with His blood. For, in spite of their taunts, no miracle had struck them down; and the greater their former fear, the more boisterous now their triumph which found vent in derisive cries and public challenges:

"If thou be the Son of God, if thou be God's friend, come down from the cross, and we shall believe."

He had not come down, and none had noticed how superhuman were His peace and His silence.

Everything grows wearisome in the end, even tormenting a defenceless enemy. And so the priests were now coming down from the Holy Mount. Darkness had taken possession of the earth. At first it looked as if a storm was brooding; gusts of wind drove the heavy clouds and piled them towards the West in stormy masses. Then the wind died

down, and night hideous and shivering, like the invisible night of death and sin in the soul, enveloped all created nature. The priests hastened their steps as the hour of the evening sacrifice was near. They shuddered, but, out of bravado, continued to laugh and chat aloud.

They had taken the longest way, and were now crossing the Royal Bridge opposite the Temple. Out of the violet-tinted clouds the lightning flashed in a blinding flame over the edifice of marble and gold. Solitary and lost in the clouds, the Temple rose up weird and frowning. Caiphas looked towards this sanctuary, the pride of Jerusalem, and became reassured, taking confidence from its indestructible pile. He spoke aloud to his companions:

"This man said: 'I will destroy the Temple of God!'"

And they all joined in his laugh of scorn. Such a temple destroyed, and by such a man! What a commentary on the words was the spectacle of to-day! The man up there on the mount had been reduced to the point of death before their eyes, and had dis-

played his utter feebleness! The Temple rose before them superb in the sheen of its marbles, and never before had the golden pinnacles of the Holy of Holies more proudly pierced the gloomy skies.

Caiphas grew bolder. The beauty of this Temple—his Temple—filled his soul with pride, and the laughter of the priests also encouraged him. With head held high, he intoned the words of the psalm:

"Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered.

"Let them that hate Him flee from before His face.

"The iniquity of their lips shall overwhelm them.

"Burning coals shall fall upon them.

"Thou wilt cast them into the fire, into the abysses from which they shall no more arise.

"But the priests and Levites, the sons of Sadoc, who kept the ceremonies of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to minister to me;

"And they shall teach my people the dif-

ference between holy and profane, and shew them how to discern between clean and unclean" (Ezech., xliv).

Caiphas meant this lesson for the people. He, the pure and the holy, with his heart full of rapine and his hands bespattered with blood, went on up the private stairway to the Temple. And over in the distance, hanging between two malefactors at the place of execution, Jesus—the condemned, the accursed, the rejected of Caiphas and his priests—was about to die.

II

And there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened.
Luke, xxiii, 44–45.

All did not share the impudent assurance of Caiphas. The darkness was terrifying. Into some less corrupted souls doubt and uneasiness were insinuating themselves. The outcry in the morning: "His blood be on us and on our children," was still resounding in their ears. Was this blood already rising in a cry for vengeance? Was it

crying out to the Lord like the blood of the just Abel? Was it the terrible anger of Jehovah that was accumulating in these clouds? Was He coming at last to the help of him who invoked Him?

Abdias, son of Aser, one of the priests, asked himself these questions in fear and trembling. There was in this crucified man something so nobly great. At first Abdias had laughed like the rest, through cowardice and through fear. But when he raised his eyes to the suffering face above, he became silent, and thenceforth no syllable escaped his lips. His gaze had encountered that of the dying victim, and a shudder of shame had descended into his heart at that look of profound and unearthly serenity. It was as if the inaccessible light of Jehovah enveloped the Man of Sorrows, and Abdias lowered his eyes. But, when he was about to go down with the others, moved by an irresistible force, he looked back. The wide-open eyes of the Crucified were following him, appealingly and forgivingly. Abdias drew the corner of his mantle over his face.

Great was the confusion in the Temple.

Oppressed by the darkness, all were beating their breasts and groaning in terror. At the order of Caiphas the trembling Levites assembled the people who crowded about the doors. To lessen the significance of the alarming phenomena, the darkness, and the terrifying eclipse of the sun which none had foreseen and nothing could explain, the Levites began the customary service: prayer, the sacrifice of the victims, and the singing of psalms.

However, not alone the populace, but the masters and high priests continued to discuss the portents among themselves under the porticos. Standing among the elder rabbis, Jochanan ben Zaccai, the young doctor, did not attempt to disguise his emotion, and the Talmud relates how forty years afterwards, during the siege of Jerusalem, he recalled with dismay the horror of this hour. Even in the midst of this storm, he confounded his hearers by his profound knowledge of the Scriptures, and by his fear added to theirs. For he believed that "the Eternal was brooding in the darkness of the cloud," as formerly on Sinai when He chose Israel; and

henceforth the Holy of Holies would remain empty. Despite the questions which were thrust upon him, he suddenly became silent like the children of Israel before the shadow of Moses, for Gamaliel was coming up to the Temple to pray.

A path was made in the crowd; heads were bent at the approach of the great master, as the ripe ears bend before the wind. Friends and strangers alike were wont to hail with admiration "the Glory of Jerusalem," but to-day they saluted him tremblingly. The repute of the grandson of Hillel the Great had no equal. "Receive the exile," the Talmud later directs, "as thou wouldst receive Rabban Gamaliel himself." But the master did not pause at these marks of honor. He went on, absorbed in his thoughts and as if lost in an unseen world. A sort of double life was familiar to him; and even during his lectures, which hundreds of pupils heard with enthusiasm, he sometimes fell into long silences which none dared to interrupt. It was believed that at such times he was listening to the wings of passing angels.

Though impregnated with the Greek

spirit, from which he borrowed breadth of view, tolerance and an exquisite sense of beauty, Gamaliel retained the haughty impassivity of the Orient. No one ever remembered to have surprised in him fear, emotion or desire. It was as if the things of this world halted at the threshold of his soul, as the sands of the desert stop abruptly at the edge of the oasis of En-Gaddi. Thus, when his young son died, no friend was allowed for forty days to cross the threshold of his sumptuous dwelling. When he came out of the mourning fixed by the law, Gamaliel simply said: "The Lord has willed it"; and never afterwards did the name of his son pass his lips. The masters cited this example to their disciples, esteeming Gamaliel greater in proportion as he seemed to them less human.

His habitual gravity of demeanor was accentuated by the darkness, the earthquake and the horror of this day, but he gave no external sign of agitation. The Pharisees and the chief priests surrounded him, and the younger members crowded after him. As usual no one questioned him; and, as he

kept silent, the discussion was little by little resumed around him.

The tone of the arguments grew bitter. Over a mere trifle the Pharisees and Sadducees were always ready to burst into mutual invectives. These two sects regularly accused each other of every wickedness and vileness, but they had arrived at a semblance of unanimity in the insults they heaped on their Victim, and in mocking at the shame and loneliness of His death. Their querulous voices were interrupted at times by the chanting of the ninety-third Psalm (the Psalm for Friday), fragments of the melody being carried on the light arpeggios of the harps and the plaintive notes of the flutes. At times, too, were heard the murmurs of the turbulent and excited crowd, who paid no attention to the sacred function despite the efforts of the Levites. A disconnected medley of questions, ejaculations and shouts reached the ears of the listener:

"Judas, who betrayed him? He fled. He went by. . . ."

"Where? Where?"

"I saw him at the threshold of the Holy of

Holies this morning casting down the pieces of silver."

"There 's the centurion in the Court of the Gentiles."

"What did he say?"

"Where is he?"

"There, in front of the Hildah Gate."

"He said: 'This man was the Son of God.'"

"What blasphemy! Beware of the priests!"

"The priests? Why, they themselves are afraid now! . . . God is for him, and is abandoning them. . . ."

And above all the din broke out the terrible confession that would not be denied:

"We have shed the blood of an innocent man."

The face of Caiphas was distorted with rage. He advanced towards the Levites and guards:

"Silence this accursed rabble!" he hissed.

"Why?" asked Gamaliel, his haughty look meeting the furtive eyes of Caiphas.

Abdias approached the master, and said in a low, trembling voice:

"He was a just man."

Gamaliel made a sign of assent, and laid his hand on the pale forehead of the young priest, who would have questioned him but he saw that once more the master's thoughts were remote from the crowd which surrounded him. Gamaliel's look was directed towards the West where the pallid sun was setting in a halo of blood. His face was distorted with an anguish he could not control, and he was speaking aloud to Jehovah who alone could at this moment understand him.

Abdias listened.

"What was this man? Does man ever attain knowledge in this medley of light and shade that we call life? The Potter's mark was on this clay. But how often dost Thou reject and break Thy work without our daring to question why! Dost Thou demand their life as a sacrifice? Dost Thou esteem it enough that Thou shouldst guard their tomb? Moses, Thy well-beloved, Thou didst bury with Thine own hands, nor did he ever reach the Promised Land. Elias Thou didst bear away in a fiery chariot after a life of

trials! Jonas vainly implored Thee to save him from despair before Thou didst glorify him at Nineve. This man also did call upon Thee, and Thou didst not answer. . . . Yet this earthquake! this darkness! this holy dread!"

"And the deaths of the criminals?" interrupted Caiphas mockingly.

"Death ends nothing."

The High Priest did not understand. No, there was nothing to fear; by arrangement with Pilate every precaution had been taken. At this very moment the condemned criminals, their limbs broken, were dying on the hill above, so that their execution might not profane the first hours of the Sabbath. Caiphas was going to discuss with the governor measures to suppress any commotion among the fickle populace. Lest the friends of Jesus might—as was probable—attempt to recover his body, he must have the sepulchre sealed and a guard set over it.

"Then you will no longer fear?" asked Gamaliel, who noted with disgust the shivering of the High Priest.

And without awaiting a reply, the master

separated himself from the crowd, and proceeded to the extreme western point of the Temple. None dared to follow him, and there he remained standing for a long interval lost in thought. Darkness was coming down on the horizon, and clouds were settling upon this arid land. But Gamaliel saw only what he desired to see, and gradually an infinitely benign influence, generating goodness and tenderness in his soul, descended upon him from that desolate hill where three crosses stood out in strong relief against the darkness. The master's face grew gentle. A serenity more than earthly took possession of him. At times the sobbing laments of the harps reached him, like the voice of a child on the verge of tears, and the sound sank into his soul, piercing through pride and human respect to that sacred source of all human tenderness which lies so near the source of tears. And while he gazed mute and motionless at that hill above, his emotion grew, all sense of the distinction between past and present seemed to vanish, and he felt as if the son of his own flesh were dying a second time.

Gamaliel was not alone. Crouching in the shadow of the columns, a Galilean peasant had endeavored to restrain his sobs at the approach of a stranger. But the man's impulsive nature could not be controlled, and soon found vent afresh in sobs and lamentation. At any other hour of his life Gamaliel might perhaps have looked, but would immediately have passed on his way, so insuperable was the wall which separated the illiterate from the masters. Moreover, to the Pharisee grief would have seemed the legitimate wage of sin. "Who hath sinned, he or his parents?" they had asked of Jesus concerning an unfortunate.

Gamaliel would then have passed along in the majestic shadow of the columns of the Temple. Why did he pause in the distant shadow of the Cross on which he looked? Sorrow had befallen the just and the pure man on the hill above. And the sorrow of the innocent always contains something sacred.

Gamaliel turned towards the Galilean:

"Why do you weep?" he asked.

The rugged face, with its bright candid

eyes now dimmed with tears, was raised towards him. Stretching his hand towards that point of the horizon on which the gaze of both had been fixed, the man stammered:

"I denied Him!"

The master could not restrain an involuntary movement of repugnance. It, however, was only momentary, and once again he did not turn aside with his habitual disdain. He did not ask himself why; he intuitively understood his changed attitude. And, almost unconsciously, he answered in a scarcely audible whisper:

"His was a soul of light. Be of good cheer. He sees and pardons thee."

"I know, I know," said Cephas[1] passionately. "As He went by with His executioners, He turned and looked on me."

And, as if this memory were breaking his heart, Cephas burst again into sobs and protestations of sorrow.

[1] Peter.

III

And the veil of the Temple was rent in two, from the top to the bottom.

Mark, xv, 38.

It was half-past two, the hour of sacrifice. All the lamps of the Temple were being lit, and the three fires prescribed by the ritual were blazing in the open air on the Altar of Holocausts. But, just as recent sounds had no echo, these lamps and these fires were without brightness. They showed dull in the ominous gloom, like bloodstains on a mourning veil. The priests were eager to be done and to return to their homes. The prophet had written: "Shut thy door behind thee; hide thee until the wrath of the Lord shall have passed." And how many there were who now longed for the closed door and the feeling of being sheltered far from a menacing and invisible enemy!

The priests who were to officiate approached the altar, clad in their robes of linen and with their feet bare. According to the ritual the priest who was to offer incense this evening was determined by lot; unlike

the other functions in the Temple, this duty was never discharged twice by the same priest. The lot fell on Abdias, son of Aser, and his name sounded hollow in the darkness. Why was he chosen on this day marked by phenomena so strange? And on the very day when for the first time he had taken his seat in the Council and condemned *this man* to death! Abdias cursed the chance which conferred on him the honor. An undefined uneasiness was rising within him and oppressing him. Ah! why could they not choose him at some other time, when the dazzling light would enchant him with a dream of beauty; when everything within him would sing like the canticle of love on the mountain of aromatic spices. But under this lowering sky his soul seemed as desolate as the valley of death.

The priests surrounded the altar. The officiator perfunctorily slew the lamb which they held bound before him. The blood gushed forth; a plaintive bleating pierced the gloom, and spent itself in a death-rattle. But none of the assistants were conscious of the rite which was being performed. Nor,

save perhaps Abdias, did any of them think of Him who was dying on the hill above; the minds of all were obsessed by the desire to be through and to depart.

Abdias now approached the Altar of Holocausts with his two assistants. One of these took coals from the fire which burned at the west of the altar, and placed them in a golden vessel; the other placed in a bowl the thirteen-scented incense mixed with salt and amber, and together all three advanced towards the Holy Place. Having ascended the steps, they entered the cedar portals surmounted with the gigantic grape-vine, the symbol of Israel: each grape of massive gold was as large as a man, and the branches writhed in the darkness like some monstrous reptile.

The priests were now about to enter the Holy Place—a long marble hall whose walls were overlaid with gold, but whose solemn grandeur was marred by its bareness. To the north stood the table for the loaves of proposition; to the south the seven-branch candlestick, of which five branches were lighted, and a little in front, before the en-

trance to the Holy of Holies, was the Altar of Incense surrounded by a crown and a gallery, both of which were of gold like everything that belonged to this sanctuary.

One of the priests placed the coals on the Altar of Incense, and presented the bowl of incense to Abdias. Both then retired without turning their backs to the altar, and Abdias was left alone. In such manner was discharged the daily ritual.

Standing before the Holy of Holies, the priest awaited the signal. His uneasiness increased momentarily. Trembling and haggard, he fixed his eyes on the mighty veil sixty feet in height which separated him from the most awesome spot on earth. The very soul of Israel haunted this august retreat, which was its pride and the pledge of its alliance with Jehovah. While still a child, Abdias had dreamt of this hour, when he would ascend the steps of the sanctuary, as the crown of his priesthood. Why was he transfixed with terror, now that the long-dreamt-of hour had at last arrived? Each morning and evening a different priest offered the incense, but as-

suredly none of them trembled thus—not even the High Priest, who once a year entered the Holy of Holies, and passed behind the veil which separated Abdias from the place "where His shadow hovered."

The eyes of Abdias remained rivetted on that glorious veil of blue, white, scarlet and purple. So thick were its embroideries that the rabbis, in their grandiloquent phrase, defied one hundred men to raise it. The quivering flames of the seven-branch candlestick made arabesques of light and shade on the walls. Abdias saw only *his* eyes—those eyes with the inscrutable look, which were opening and closing in agony.

Suddenly the western lamp flickered and went out. A shudder shook the priest's frame. What was happening now? Was the darkness to be still more complete and invade even the Temple itself? He did not dare to turn round to see what draught could have entered the closed sanctuary. He caught his breath in the weird darkness.

How unbearably long this interval of waiting seemed! He felt he could no longer endure this meeting with the Invisible. For

the first time a doubt disturbed his habitual self-confidence. His purity seemed in question, although he would not admit the reason. With an effort he turned his thoughts into other channels. He accused himself of having omitted a legal fast, and on one day he had violated the Sabbath rest by walking beyond—a very little beyond—the prescribed limits!

Such hypocrisy and dissimulation, however, did not comfort him long. He could not stifle the voice within him, and even felt that he would suffer less by viewing himself as he really was. On this very day he had through envy and fear of his fellows condemned "the man," who perhaps had not been guilty! . . . That his conscience should thus protest, in spite of the lying equivocations amid which he had been nurtured, indicated how young Abdias still was. And then he began to excuse himself. Can one ever know who *is* guilty? *He* was not like other men, nor was he like the priests. Can a man be quite innocent who is so entirely different from others? And then he had said nothing in his own defence! What was

the use of trying to save those who had no desire to be saved? He must be dead by this time. Or was he dead? . . .

What anguish there was in this uncertainty! Of what was *he* thinking in that awful unbroken silence of his? What was it that *he* saw afar off with those wide-open eyes fixed on no terrestrial horizon? What a strange brightness seemed to enkindle his visage! . . . And now . . .

Abdias tottered, and to save himself from falling, clutched one of the horns of the altar. Just then three trumpet-blasts resounded through the Temple, and all noises were stilled into an adoring silence. It was the ninth hour, and Abdias raised his hand to sprinkle the incense on the altar.

He never finished the action. His hair stood on end, as before his eyes the dread veil was suddenly seized by an invisible hand and rent from top to bottom. Jehovah was breaking His covenant and deserting His sanctuary. The priest in his horror overturned the coals and, casting away the incense, fled stupefied into the darkness.

The people saw him pass, haggard and

uttering cries of terror. The incredible news sped from mouth to mouth. The veil of the Temple was rent! The covenant of the Lord with Israel was broken! There was a prolonged cry of amazement. . . . Could it be true? Could it be possible? They surrounded the priest plying him with questions concerning the dread portents which he had seen and heard, and the darkness increased the confusion and disorder.

Abdias, livid and mute, was the centre of all interest. Appeals and questions poured in upon him. At last the voice of Jochanan ben Zaccai, the famous master, pronounced the name of Zacharias, and the lips of the young priest opened as with a groan of horror he repeated:

"Open thy gates, O Libanus, and let fire devour thy cedars.

"Howl, thou fir tree, for the cedar is fallen, for the mighty are laid waste:

"Howl, ye oaks of Basan, because the fenced forest is cut down.

"The voice of the howling of the shepherds, because their glory is laid waste:

"The voice of the roaring of the lions, because the pride of the Jordan is spoiled."

Flashes of lightning now succeeded one another without intermission. A violent trembling seized the earth; rocks clave asunder and crumbled away. Below, in the valley of Hinnom, the doors of the sepulchres opened, and the dead issued forth from their tombs. Was the world about to return to chaos? Gamaliel accosted the young priest, listened to his incoherent words, and gravely bade him: "Go to *him!*"

Crowding to the doors of the Temple the poor were voicing their groans and entreaties. The priests and Pharisees no longer affected an impossible self-assurance. The people begged for pardon:

"We have sinned! We have shed innocent blood."

"Jesus! Jesus of Nazareth!"

This name seemed to be on everybody's lips, and was re-echoed by the new arrivals from Golgotha who rushed towards the Temple in search of a refuge.

Abdias freed himself from the crowd, and

walked straight before him with terror-stricken eyes. Like one demented he kept repeating: "I must see him again! I must tell him. . . ."

He stopped a man who was coming down from the mount, striking his breast. Would he arrive in time? Would he reach him alive?

The man answered:

"He is dead."

THROUGH THE GLOOM

THROUGH THE GLOOM

I

WHAT a weird evening! Shadows were gathering in the dull twilight, and a secret horror seemed to dart from every gloomy recess. Yet it was not late—scarcely six o'clock. But the Sabbath lasted from evening to evening with all the rites and precepts which had been laid down by the masters of the Law, and which made this "day of days" a burden, instead of a day to be welcomed "with shouts of triumph like a king, and gay attire like a bride."

Gamaliel returned to his dwelling, picking his way through the noisy and cosmopolitan throngs who had celebrated the Pasch and were now hastening towards their houses or their tents, terrified at the extraordinary turn events had taken. The broad Xystus, Jerusalem's forum, was covered with improvised shelters; at the city gates whole

tribes were encamped, men and asses, goats and restless camels mingling confusedly together.

Each trade was assembled in a special quarter. On one side butchers were killing cattle in the open air, handling their knives with the grave solemnity of the sacrificing priests in the Temple. On the other were assembled the fruit and vegetable merchants. Further on the wine merchants displayed leathern bottles of exquisite wines which their caravans had brought in from Sidon and Tyre; while in another direction were seen the bazaars of rare cloths and the perfume booths in which incense and sandalwood burned unceasingly. But the songs, shouts, and the constant coming and going of the people did not enliven this Nisan evening. The illuminations of the Temple vainly cast large patches of light over Jerusalem the Fair; these fantastic rays only served to accentuate the gloom of the deserted districts in which other vague shadows seemed to gather and steal about.

Gamaliel was turning homewards deep in thought. Dread questions clamored for an

answer in the mind of the great master, but he was unwilling to give them a speedy response. He was endeavoring to collect his disordered thoughts, as shepherds collect their scattered flocks. His gaze did not rest on the picturesque spectacle around him. In reality, he saw only what was going on within himself. He barely recognized with an affectionate salute Chaninah ben Dosa, who had prayed for the son of his youth, and Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, members of the Sanhedrim like himself, who were hastening towards the Gate of Ephraim. On passing Nicodemus had called: "We will see you afterwards." After what? Gamaliel did not stop to question, but mechanically made a gesture of assent.

He was now crossing the threshold of his home. Susanna's room looked out on the second court, which was paved with marbles but was devoid of plants or flowers, since the rose-garden of the rabbis was alone tolerated in Jerusalem. A fountain sent into the air a stream of water which fell back with a splash into a large basin. Often had Gamaliel listened to the light step of the

young girl keeping time to the patter of this murmuring water; and often, through the veil of spray, he had seen her—the type of purity itself—pass to and fro. But on this evening all poetry and joy seemed dead within his soul, even his unique joy in this light of his heart.

For a moment he wondered if Susanna had returned. Then by a rapid intuition he felt she must have done so. All the flowers with which their dwelling had been decorated for the Pasch and for the solemn week that followed had disappeared; narcissi, anemones, lilies and asphodels lay withering before the doors. And he felt that, returning to this festive house heart-broken with grief, Susanna had snatched the flowers from the tables and vases and cast them out-of-doors as mocking her grief.

How she must have suffered! He knew so intimately her depth of soul, and would have shown her so much sympathy if he might have gone to her. But she did not seek sympathy; and, respecting her silence, Gamaliel passed by the young girl's room without speaking a word.

He reached the terrace and passed into the Alyah, the room whither he was wont to retire to study and to pray. Through the drawn curtains he saw Jerusalem still shrouded in the dull twilight, and peaceful as a scene from fairyland. On the Mountain of Moab purple shadows were hovering; and here and there the flickering lights of the Temple caught the white angles of the houses and the domes of the roofs.

It was on such a weird night as this, a night in Nisan, that Abraham was terrified at the great darkness when the Eternal approached and spoke to him. On such a night, at Babylon, the mysterious hand appeared on the walls of the banquet chamber, writing the words which stammering sages vainly essayed to expound. All these things had occurred about the season of the Pasch. Gamaliel's mind touched on these memories without dwelling long on them. He had the traditional soul of the Jew combined with the refined and weary nature of the Greek. His blood did not run cold with fear like Abraham's. No hand appeared on the marble walls of his dwelling over which the

flickering lamp of cedar oil flung fitful patches of light and gloom. But what hand had seized and rent the veil of the Temple from top to bottom? Gamaliel pondered over this overwhelming mystery, and the terrifying events of the past dwindled into insignificance beside the dread incident which he had witnessed on this very day.

Alone, and remote from all, Gamaliel reviewed each incident of this strange day: his vain efforts to rescue Jesus from the priests, the condemnation, the outcries of hatred or of regret from the fickle mob, the torments, the death. The repentance of Cephas touched him keenly; Susanna's grief pierced his heart; the baseness and meanness of the Sanhedrim seemed to cover his face with shame. But alas! still deeper than sorrow or shame, doubt tortured him under the mask of indifference which he tried to retain. Who was this Jesus? He appealed to and yet repelled him. That bloody apparition which he had seen at the turning of a street, and the eternal sweetness of those closed eyes were an inexplicable enigma. That final picture of Jesus heightened the mys-

tery. *Who* was he that had thus sacrificed himself? *Who* spoke and suffered thus, the object at once of the curses and the blessings of an entire people, a sign of contradiction set amongst men?

Gamaliel pressed his forehead between his hands. He determined to control this spell, which was perhaps but a passing one, and, in so far as he could, to probe its causes. He unrolled one of the precious manuscripts of the Scripture, whose very price placed them beyond the reach of the poor. He sought the prophecy of which ben Zaccai had spoken. He passed over Daniel and Isaias. The passage occurred in Zacharias, he remembered. How admirable were the words which Abdias had quoted! "Open thy gates, O Libanus, and let fire devour thy cedars. . . ." He continued that eleventh chapter and read:

"If it be good in your eyes, bring hither my wages.

"And they weighed for my wages thirty pieces of silver.

"And the Lord said to me: 'Cast it unto

the potter, this goodly price at which I was prized by them.'

"And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

"It must refer to Judas of Kerioth!" said Gamaliel. "Just now they were speaking of him in the Temple! He sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver! He later cast the silver on the floor of the Holy Place, and the priests are now deliberating to what use they are to devote this tainted money! The words of the prophet are as clear as the lightning's flash, which for a moment illumines the night but leaves behind a darkness still more profound."

Then he turned to Hillel the Great, as he had often done in the sorrows of his childhood. He tried to picture up his venerable ancestor who spoke with such a gentle and sure voice, untroubled and fearless. The better to expel his present uneasiness he recalled the memories of his ancestor which his father had transmitted to him. Hillel had come from Babylon to study at Jerusa-

lem. Each day he labored to support his aged mother, and, his work ended, he attended in the evening the lectures of the rabbis. One day when he could not spare from his poor wages the modest price of admission to the lecture, he was found fainting in the snow at one of the windows of the synagogue. In spite of the cold, he had remained glued to the lattice-work so as not to miss a single lesson. How often in his dreams had Gamaliel seen his grandfather thus, numbed under his frozen mantle which he did not even notice, so great was his thirst for truth!

"Truth?" murmured Gamaliel. "What is truth?"

Did he speak the words aloud? That very morning they had fallen from the lips of Pilate! Up to the day of Christ's death it had been the wail of humanity addressed to *him*—not the plaint of the body in travail, but the plaint of the soul beseeching an answer.

"Why did he not answer?" thought Gamaliel. "Why did he not declare the truth concerning himself to Pilate?"

Everything seemed to bring him back to that haunting memory. He summoned his Pharisaic pride to his rescue. Why should he interest himself in this Galilean, this workman? He scarcely understood his language. He scornfully recalled how he had buried the manuscript of the Book of Job—the only Aramean version which he possessed of the Scriptures—under a slab in the courtyard, as he did not wish that this vulgar tongue—the language which Jesus spoke!—should soil by its contact his Hebrew rolls and Greek manuscripts. But he did not then know that Jesus spoke this language of the common people!

What should he do now?

By a great effort Gamaliel fixed his attention on the texts which ran around the wall of his room for prayer and study—sentences from the Scriptures and the most famous sayings of the learned Hillel. The Pharisaic shadow crossed the brow of the master; the chain of tradition tightly enclosed him, but his interior uneasiness was fast becoming unbearable. Into such illuminated souls shadows never penetrate with-

out increase of grief. Gamaliel read aloud the haughty saying which Hillel pronounced after he had become intoxicated with his knowledge and his title of prince (*nasi*), and had forgotten his own past:

"We, the masters, the blessed. . . . The others, the illiterate, the populace, the accursed. . . ."

Why had the night grown so gloomy? Had those clear nights of the Orient, with their opal whiteness, forsaken a country cursed by *his* blood? All was silent without, except that the wind was still uttering a mournful wail through the darkness of the narrow streets. Who was wailing through its voice? What lament was borne by these short sobs that rose and fell like the moaning of the waves of the sea? In this universal sadness of nature, Gamaliel was experiencing the intensity of suffering which comes at night to one whose mind is obsessed.

" 'The others are the accursed!' . . ."

Then, the peasant who was dying above on the cross . . . ! He too . . . ! Gamaliel could not finish the thought. The letters still shone on the white marble, but *they lied*

. . . *Hillel lied* . . . Gamaliel violently tore his soul free from ancestral obsession and murmured: "Jesus! Blessed Jesus!" And these words gladdened him, as if the link which rivetted him to the Pharisaic chain had broken, liberating him from his heritage of pride and leaving him alone face to face with truth.

II

Footsteps were approaching, and Gamaliel stood up to curb his violent agitation. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both bound to Gamaliel by ties of friendship and blood, were coming to visit him as they had promised. They were careworn and pale, and a strong odor of myrrh still clung to their garments. They saluted Gamaliel with affectionate veneration, and silently seated themselves near him, as if they were visiting a house of mourning—as they had visited him at the burial of his only son. Everything around them was hushed under the starless sky in that awful silence which the desert wind seemed to fill with lamentation. Words were slow to spring from these

Oriental lips. The words they had to utter were still buried in their hearts among their sacred memories. Their sorrow did not discharge itself in a stormy flood of tears; it did not burst forth in tempestuous gusts of lamentation. But their hearts finally overflowed drop by drop as during the rainy season the water-cisterns overflow in the immensity of the desert.

"When I met you a little while ago," said Nicodemus at last, "I was going with Joseph to Calvary. All is over now."

"I knew that all was over at three o'clock," interrupted Gamaliel briefly. "But pray do not speak to me further of *his* sufferings!"

Such agitation passed over the grave face of the master that Nicodemus could no longer restrain his tears.

"I shall not speak of His sufferings," he replied, "although we could scarce have numbered the wounds and bruises of His body. And yet many extraordinary thoughts sprang up within me as I beheld Him. I saw His sufferings and I heard His words. But His greatest sufferings were certainly not those of the flesh."

"How did you manage to reach him?" again interrupted the master. "Did you defend him against the priests? Did they scoff at his tomb as they scoffed at his cross?"

"I went to Pilate," said Joseph, "as soon as I heard the rumor that Jesus was dead. I asked for His body and Pilate gave it to me. Together with Nicodemus I then set out to bury Him."

"Indeed!" said Gamaliel incredulously. "The times have then changed since you, Nicodemus, used to go by night to consult the young master. Then you feared to compromise yourself. Has this fear been removed by the ignominy of his death?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Nicodemus, "how I should wish to blot out these memories! For days before this awful event I was wrestling with doubts, although I felt myself no longer like the rest. I went to Him at night so as to keep my visit a secret, especially from our brethren. The wind was whistling as now through the narrow alleys, but the sky above was studded with stars. And Jesus compared the wind to the invisible Spirit whose voice we hear, although we know not whence it

comes or whither it goes. I said to Him: 'I know you are a doctor sent by God. . . . *I know!*' And I offered Him only this shame-faced belief, this confession under cover of the darkness. Yet He had no reproach for me. But to hear thus alone His august and inspiring words! What greater reproach could there be! What foolish pride or false shame possesses us that even then I did not cast myself at His feet, saying: 'Help me. I believe, but with a faith as cowardly as myself'? His death has wrought what His life failed to accomplish. I have confessed Him before the governor in reparation for that secret confession during the night. We have taken Him down from the Cross and buried Him. But I shall never forgive myself for my cowardice."

"I have never spoken with him," observed Gamaliel, who was listening uneasily. "I acted only for his welfare when I warned him and tried to save him from his enemies. If I had believed, nothing would have made me hesitate to proclaim my belief."

"There is much faith already evident in your doubts and uneasiness. Would you

dare to declare to us with equal assurance: 'I do not believe'? Speak to us, master," said Joseph in anguish; "our knowledge is to yours as the knowledge of a child."

Gamaliel remained for some time pensive, scrutinizing his inmost sentiments for the sake of these dear companions of his life. The moment that he had been avoiding was here; the opinion that he pronounced would certainly influence theirs. This man of integrity weighed the responsibility without shirking it. He spoke what he found within him, as he would have declared it at the moment of crossing the threshold of the tomb.

"Never before has my soul so eluded me. Never has so alarming a problem been proposed to me. I hesitate to express an opinion. So much beauty is required by a soul if it is to attract the eternal light, and I no longer find within me that calm certitude of beauty. Of my old principles many are no longer mine. A few days ago I said to Nicodemus in scorn: 'You went to this peasant, this illiterate!' And just now I was about to repeat it, doing violence to my soul. . . .

You visited one who was the well-beloved of God."

The master's eyes were again fixed on the mural inscription which had previously been one of the poles of his life. The sentiments there expressed had really vanished from his soul, despite his deliberate and proud reversion to the prejudices of a lifetime, when he saw for the first time the light of God shine from the countenance of the young prophet.

"I said furthermore: 'If he is the Christ, the Lord will save him.' I spoke impious words. What the Lord will do, none knows. For who hath fathomed the ways of the Lord?"

After a moment's silence he continued:

"I am tossed about by contradictory thoughts like a mastless and rudderless bark in the midst of a storm. We believe him to be the friend of God; we confess that he is a prophet. . . . But shall we dare to declare that he is the Christ? . . . He has established nothing; he has been executed like a criminal; his disciples are scattered; his work seems destroyed. To convince us

that he is the Messias, greater than Elias and Moses; to prove to us that he is Eloim, the expected Son of Jehovah, needs more than miracles. The prophets also raised the dead to life. . . . Nor are this trembling of the earth, this inexplicable darkness, and the rending of the veil of the Temple finally convincing. For, while these truths are hard to understand, there are many even amongst us masters who are no longer certain that there is a Messias or that he will ever come."

The soul of Jew and Greek had spoken.

Saul of Tarsus, Gamaliel's disciple, knew well the two currents in the mind of his master, when he wrote that Christ and His Cross were a stumbling-block unto the Jews and unto the Gentiles foolishness. He knew also the need of irrefutable proofs for these subtle and uneasy spirits, since he did not hesitate to declare: "If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain. . . ."

The wind continued to blow through the narrow streets. The Spirit of the Lord was passing—that spirit concerning which one knows not whence it comes or whither it goes.

Gamaliel continued:

"But that light which used to emanate from him! The living miracle that he was! You know the miracle I mean—a miracle greater than all the cures which he wrought! After I had seen him, all else appeared to me vain, artificial and miserable. Our idle discussions on truth resembled some childish game of tossing pebbles at the stars. Can we harbor within us a slumbering self? I slept until he awakened within me the desire for another light. His penetrating look shattered all our formulæ, piercing the surface of things until it reached the very sources of life, and carried one away as the vulture does his prey—or rather as the shepherd rescues his sheep from the thorny brambles, stooping patiently and tenderly over it. . . ."

The master's voice was far away, and he spoke in accents of an infinite tenderness. He was calling up the memory of Him; he was loving Him.

Joseph stifled an exclamation of astonishment as it escaped his lips. He was tracing the road his friend had journeyed since they

had for the first time spoken together at the supper on the Pasch. Was he not already ripe for enrolment among the disciples? He had recognized Christ as a prophet; all that was now necessary was his recognition of Him as the Messias.

A long silence followed. Shrinking from the discussion of the superhuman struggle on the Cross, Gamaliel asked:

"How did you bury him?"

Joseph described in the most minute detail the descent from the Cross and the hurried embalming of the dead Christ.

"He had been dead for some hours," he added. "His wounds no longer bled—not even the deep wound in the side which the centurion had made to render death certain. I laid my hand on that heart whose beating was now stilled. Both Nicodemus and I were blinded with our tears, and I felt that this sad offering somehow found acceptance with Him who so desired that we should love Him. If only you had seen Him, His face drawn with anguish, but so beautiful and, if I may say it, so divine! Hope seemed to radiate from Him; how, I cannot tell. All is

ended, yet nothing is ended. He is dead, ice-cold, and His heart beats no more. I myself filled His gaping wounds with sprigs of myrrh. I placed my hand on those lips from which no breath issued. His body was so livid that it seemed as if no drop of blood remained there. I have thus the most complete material certainty of His death; I have proofs of it, and yet I know not what I dare to expect . . . but I do expect it. . . ."

"Where is his tomb?" interrupted Gamaliel.

"In my garden near Golgotha. I had had my sepulchre hollowed there, and in it we buried Him. As we carried Him to the tomb, the priests were coming down from the Temple to gather in the appointed field the sheaf which is to be offered to-morrow before the altar. The two processions met —we tearful and sobbing, they singing and joyous; and their ritual seemed to me obsolete and meaningless now! The mystical offering of the earth was no longer in their hands; it rested in ours! . . . Do you not believe it! . . . Like Abraham—like Moses —He is dead . . . and yet *He lives.*"

"Hold!" said Gamaliel. "Who can say that the Lord Himself will not go through our streets?"

In the dark sky the moon was now rising, and enveloping in her dreamy softness man and nature—the slumbering Jerusalem, the distant slopes of the mountains, the barren land surrounding the city, and that silent garden where the Christ slept in death alone.

THE DESPAIR OF JUDAS

THE DESPAIR OF JUDAS

BETWEEN the agony in the garden and the resurrection of Jesus Christ three Apostles, and only three, are mentioned in the story of the Evangelists. John, standing at the foot of the Cross near the Mother of Sorrows and offering to Son and Mother his faithful but impotent love, represents the flower of our humanity for which Christ died; Peter follows Christ afar off even to the hall of Caiphas, and in his weakness denies the Master whom he never ceased to love, but he weeps over his denial; Judas wanders from the Gazith, where the priests are seated in council, to the Temple, where he throws away his pieces of silver, and thence to the cursed Valley of Hinnom, where he hangs himself. On approaching the story of Judas, we seem to be approaching the pit of which Dante says: "Those who enter must leave all hope behind." We

descend through all the successive circles of despair and wretchedness and shame, and finally "that soul below which suffers beyond all the rest is Judas Iscariot."

The masters whom we have followed in this painful study are of the opinion that the Gospel, in repeating the words "Satan entered into him," wishes to console mankind for the baseness of this betrayal. Judas acted under diabolical influence. Satan first suggested and then spurred him to commit the crime, stifling in him every human sentiment. Satan dwelt within him, possessed him; and it was thus that human lips were brought to give that diabolical kiss.

This is very true; but Satan must have taken possession of a soul which voluntarily recognized his control. And in the long course of the ages, others have concluded a like pact with sin; others have descended step by step into that pit; other betrayals have followed that greatest of all betrayals.

Judas heads a sinister train, "a race of men accursed beyond all others . . . ," whose very treason brings them to that state "where tears prevent weeping, and lament,

falling back on the heart, redoubles its anguish" (Dante, "Inferno," xxiii-xxiv).

I

From the hour when he had betrayed Jesus in the garden, Judas wandered at random like a hunted beast. At first he had fled; then, like one demented, he retraced his footsteps, and followed Jesus at a distance to the house of Caiphas and then to Herod's, expecting perhaps some miracle or some uprising of the people. Judas built no hope on the High Priest, for why should he allow his prey to elude his grasp? But, when they clamored for a miracle at the house of Herod, the Son of Man would surely sway at pleasure the superficial and capricious minds of the populace, and would then regain His liberty. Doubtless the hatred of the priests would later overtake Him; but then it would no longer be he, Judas, who would have betrayed Him. Then, should the Christ repeat His prediction: "One of you shall betray Me," and should the Apostles again in one voice de-

mand: "Is it I?" he would not have again to hear the answer: "Thou hast said it!"

Ah! if it were only some other that had betrayed Jesus—even though He should be put to death!—and not he!

No miracle, however, was wrought by Christ before Herod; and for this omission again Judas hated Him with all his soul. Why did He refuse to show His power, He who could do all things? Did He prefer perchance to be condemned and to die? He must have preferred it, since at that hour He might by a sign have confounded them all; and this sign He refused to give! . . . But, if Jesus deliberately chose to die, why did this remorse consume his soul? Granted that he had betrayed Jesus; he had betrayed Him who, once before, had passed through the midst of His enemies when they meditated hurling Him from the rock outside the city; Him who always remained His own master, the arbiter of His own destiny. . . . Where then was the crime?

Ah! now He stands before Pilate. . . . Judas slipped through the crowd with face so haggard that the children who beheld him

sought refuge in the bosoms of their mothers. On recognizing him the very men who accompanied him to Gethsemani shunned him! Rumor had it that the governor was disturbed and anxious; he had come out on the balcony to parley with the people, and then retired to question the accused. Pilate was all-powerful and could declare that he found no crime in Jesus, and that would set Him free. A message came from his wife that her sleep had been disturbed by a dream concerning this just man. The hopes of Judas rose: the superstitious Romans believed in portents and dreams.

But the clamor for His death grew more violent, triumphed over every hesitation and compromise, and finally the governor abandoned Him to His fate.

"Then Judas, who betrayed Him, seeing that He was condemned, was touched with repentance and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients, saying:

"I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? Look thou to it.

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"And casting down the pieces of silver in the Temple, he departed . . ." (Matt., xxvii, 3-5).

This impulsive action, however, brought him no relief, as it was powerless to save Jesus. Abandoned by his accomplices who, like all accomplices, had for their scapegoat only words of scorn; without resort; an abomination in the eyes of God and self and fellow-man; tortured by that revulsion of feeling which is the usual aftermath of crime when the smoke of passion blows away and the sinner remains face to face with the deed which cannot be undone, Judas continued his aimless flight. He fled to Hinnom, the valley of tombs, and hurled himself into a cleft in the rocks there, hoping he would neither see nor hear anything further. He strove to wrench his thoughts away from the hideous drama, but they wandered fitfully back to the past—over the events that had led to *this!* His madness had intervals of lucidity, like the awful calms that precede the outburst of the simoon in the solitude of the desert.

II

LIKE the other Apostles, Judas had been called by Jesus after the Sermon on the Mount. He had enrolled himself in the Master's company, ready to consecrate himself to the Messianic work as he understood it—a work of conquest, power and glory. But allegiance to Christ differs from allegiance to man; for to a man—even to a king—we may offer bodily service while retaining the freedom of our souls. In *His* service, however, it is the soul which surrenders itself in thrall: fealty to *Him* is a dread and silent oblation which excepts nothing and accepts everything; and as for the actual service rendered, nothing matters—to Him who has no need of our service—save that we serve with love abounding.

But can one even for a moment compare the doubtless sincere offering which Judas made of himself to the virginal and tender self-oblation of John, or to the ingenuous oblation of Nathanael, "in whom there was no guile," or to the impulsive and spontan-

eous surrender of Peter and Andrew? In this as in everything, Judas showed a mercenary and calculating nature. He had heard of the miracles and the claims of the Master and of the kingdom which He foretold. An ambitious belief in a Messias-King, who would restore the splendors of Israel, took possession of him; and we see moreover, from the numerous questions or utterances of the other Apostles, that at first many of them shared in this semi-human faith of the Jewish people.

Truly, for those who held this worldly faith, the first period of the mission of Jesus Christ must have been an era of intoxication. The hosannas of the multitude, the joyous shouts of those He cured, the triumphal march through the midst of the people, the predictions and homage of the Baptist: all this pointed to the King whom they were expecting. The greed for power in Judas grew stronger; his hopes were aroused. He would have a place in this kingdom; his intelligence and sense of order were already recognized, since he was entrusted with the alms and had charge of the common purse.

And, when he was sent to evangelize Galilee in the name of the Son of Man, he felt himself invested with a superhuman power. He healed the sick; he escaped poisons and stratagems; he won the people to follow him when the Master sent him on the mission, and—proudest fact of all!—he found the very demons were subject to him!

"Judas! Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Who uttered those words! Why did all the echoes cast them back in his ears? Were the demons who now possessed him avenging themselves for their former subjection? Was it an hour, or was it a century since Christ had uttered these words in the night? Judas no longer knew; for him the flight of time had ceased. He wiped his lips convulsively. In the distance shouts were heard like the noise of mighty waters breaking against tall cliffs. He arose tottering, and scrambled through the valley between the boulders and the tombs, his clenched hands pressed against his face. Again there was a silence; Judas fell heavily to the ground in

the shadow of some dead trees, and heard no more.

III

When had he begun to hate Him?

He remembered that dislike, if not hatred, had darkened his soul when for the first time Christ had put aside human glory and escaped from the excited populace who wished to proclaim Him king. Thenceforth Judas had looked on Him with distrust. Why lose so glorious an opportunity? Could He hope for a better? Perhaps He did not yet find His hold on the people sufficiently assured, and thought it necessary to strengthen His position still more before publicly confronting all the existing institutions of Judea which were in league against Him! If Judas comforted himself momentarily with this thought, he had soon to abandon it. This rejection of honors and of an earthly triumph was not an accident, nor was it a studied policy of delay. No; it was a fixed resolve, a deliberate line of conduct which became further accentuated as each day passed. Soon Jesus withdrew from

the enthusiasm of Jerusalem, as He had relinquished the love of Galilee. And when the Sadducees met together to tempt Him, and asked for some sign in the heavens, He who scattered His gifts on all sides at the prayer of the beggar, at the request of the poor widow, refused to vouchsafe a single sign of His mission to this formidable body at the very moment when a miracle would have won them to His side or at least silenced them. The scornful laughs of the Sadducees had on that occasion awakened a too faithful echo in the heart of Judas. He began to doubt, to murmur. This was not the Messias whom he expected, the Messias who was to re-establish the Kingdom of Israel; this man who preached everlastingly of humility, of self-denial, of pardon, could not be he. Judas felt that he had been deceived, and the bitterness of his deception increased as the predictions of the Master grew clearer, more formal and more sad.

At first He spoke indeed only in obscure parables. Thus, when Jesus told of the destruction of the Temple, none of His disciples understood at the time that He re-

ferred to His own Body. Nor did they discern until later the true significance of His more explicit parables—the Good Shepherd laying down his life for his flock; the son of the king rejected with the shout: "We will not have this man to reign over us."

But, if they could be blind to the meaning of these parables, none could mistake the precise and startling utterances that followed, announcing sufferings, scorn and death. Each of these pronouncements separated Judas further from this Christ in whom he had been so mistaken. The foundation on which he had based his hopes was being cut from beneath him; the prospect before him he detested; he was beginning to realize the full force of the gloomy prophecies, and the edifice of his faith and his dreams was toppling. He conceived a strong aversion towards Him whom he held responsible for this new trial. He no longer understood Him. He began to criticize His warnings—at first to himself, then in a low voice with others. . . .

How clearly he remembered each bitter disillusion! Thus, after Peter's confession:

"Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God," Jesus began to reveal to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the ancients and Scribes and chief priests and be put to death (Matt., xvi, 21).

How clearly he recalled the prophecy after the Transfiguration, four days before Palm Sunday: "The Son of Man shall be scourged, mocked and crucified. He shall be betrayed."

Betrayed! That was the word He always used!

. . . . . .

But what was this clamor which mounted up towards him from the city below, and which, increasing ever in volume, enveloped the traitor? Was it the noise of *His* execution? Impossible; there must surely be some delay. Suppose he should return and find out! Ah! if only he might once more behold the countenance of Christ, even though that countenance were blood-stained, even though he should see upon it the anger of the Living God! If only he might hear from Him anything except that tender

word: "Friend!" Any other word but that —all the abuse, reproaches, threats and maledictions that He wished, but not that word: "Friend!"

His hate against this Master who knew not hatred increased; he hated Him for that word which sounded all the depths of his infamy. Haggard, beside himself, seized with a wild frenzy in which the past and present were confusedly mingled, he repeated aloud with a hollow laugh: "Friend! . . . Friend!"

If only Jesus had taken advantage of the enthusiasm of the crowd on Palm Sunday, how different it would be! Perhaps it was not too late! . . .

But no, it would have been just the same, since Judas had long ceased to love Him. Not knowing whom to fall back upon, having lost the ideal of his soul—if the dream of honors and of power under an earthly Messias can be called an ideal!—Judas had given himself up to morbid introspection. He had yielded himself a willing prey to the passion which was strongest in him, and which his blighted hopes inflamed. Balked ambition

had begotten avarice; and, as he had charge of the common purse, he finally had descended to deceit and theft, thinking thus to preserve some shred of his tattered dream. Then every incident began to embitter him, and every sin hardened his soul. The more guilty he felt himself, the greater his hatred against the Holy One.

And the revolt of his shattered hopes and dreams; the enforced hypocrisy of his declarations of devotion and fidelity, where he felt only disgust; his pent-up anger and sense of injury—all reduced him gradually to that condition in which, at the supper in Bethany, "Satan entered into him."

IV

Such is the unvarying story of renegades. The deeper they sink, the greater their blasphemy. At first they lay all the blame on the cause or faith which they are about to betray. They belittle it and distort it. After renouncing it, they come to curse it. For a time they endeavor indeed to establish a semblance of harmony between their soiled

consciences and the remnant of faith which they still retain; for sophistries never fail the deceitful heart of man! But finally truth has its revenge, and tears aside the veils of deceit, disclosing all their shifty secrets and revealing all the hollowness of their equivocations.

"To what purpose is this waste? This ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and the price given to the poor. . . ."

No! No! It was not the poor who mattered; it was the money, the loss of the pleasures it represented, that instigated this regret. Such was the true meaning of this hypocritical remark. And in a little while that hypocrisy was to sink lower in infamy, and set the same value on the Master—no, not the same value; not three hundred, but thirty pence!

. . . . . .

Peter also had sinned against Jesus. Thrice had he denied Him in conversation with a maid-servant. But, heart-broken and overwhelmed by his sin, since then he had not ceased weeping. He had denied Him!

Even if he was less degraded than Judas, even if he had the gloomy satisfaction of not having contributed to the death of his Master, he knew at least that he had, alas! added to the desolation of that death by his craven declaration: "I know not the man!"

On realizing what he had done, Peter likewise felt in all its acuteness the appalling sensation which obsesses the guilty after the consummation of their crime—that appalling sensation felt by the first transgressors in the Garden of Eden, when, trembling with fear, they found their eyes opened to their guilt.

But as soon as the horror of his sin seized Peter, he wept. He had no thought of flight. He had no thought of turning aside from Jesus. When Jesus looked on him as He passed by, he did not evade His look. On the contrary, he fixed his tear-blinded eyes on those of the Saviour—feeling, knowing full well that Jesus had pity on him in his distress. Thereupon the horror with which Peter regarded himself increased; but he loved the more ardently, with a humble

and unspeakable love, Him whom he had denied but who now pardoned him.

How different were the souls of Peter and Judas! The one simple, confiding, impulsive; a soul which could sink very low, but which, even from the abyss of its degradation, could turn towards Jesus with a cry of repentance. The other, scornful and obdurate, too vile to know its own hatefulness, turned its hatred against Him in whose eyes it had fallen so low. And yet Judas was conscious of his crime. Remorse enshrouded him, and ringed him around like the circle of fire within which cruel children enclose a scorpion. But not for one instant did his heart throb with a return of its olden affection.

Had he ever truly loved his Master? Deep down in his heart had he ever loved anything except himself?

It is not an isolated impression which leads one to repentance and drives another to despair. It is the last link of an invisible chain that a man forges day by day, often without being aware of it.

V

Away! He must get farther off! He must hide in deeper night!

An awful silence had succeeded the shouts which Judas thought he heard just now. His thoughts no longer came; his groans were stilled. The deathlike silence invaded his very soul. The sun grew dark and shadows crawled over the earth. Between the pale olive-trees, amid the white stones piled about the tombs, patches of black appeared. Was it the darkness of hell? The dread valley seemed full of horrors. A wan light shot through deep furrows in the stormy sky. Still silent, Judas wandered about like a madman, in unconscious quest of something—something tragic and far-off. But he could not find it. He could see the dried earth around him, but walls of rock and withered trees shut out the horizon from him.

For a moment he stood motionless, but then in a fury resumed his flight, and finally chanced on a rocky, precipitous path which

wound around a mass of rocks. Up this path he clambered, since from its top he could command a wider view. For an instant he halted, then closed his eyes in terror, but violently reopened them. His gaze swept the East, and then fixed itself. A spasm crossed his livid features; his arms jerked out wildly and his lips moved as in a kiss: "Friend! Friend!" He felt his soul engulfed in the very horror of the word. . . .

The Cross of Jesus stood up against the darkness. With great difficulty could Judas distinguish the bloodless body, the dim white figure with its bowed head. But in his crazed vision the traitor *saw* the blood-stained body, and it seemed to him as if he could count each separate wound. . . . Was that his Victim calling him? Was He awaiting him on the shores of eternity? He did not know. But from Golgotha, from the depths of the tombs, from the trembling earth and from the storm-tossed sky the words of malediction pressed down upon him:

"Judas! Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

His hair stood on end with horror; despite the cold, great drops of sweat rolled down his countenance. He panted as if in agony. Long-drawn sobs burst from his lips, and his wails pierced the night. . . .

Ah! if even then he had invoked Him, had looked towards Him as Peter had done!

If even, without a movement, a look or an appeal, one thought of love had passed through the wastes of his heart! But no, his heart remained sealed.

For a long time he stood there with outstretched arms, unable to tear himself away from the vision of death. He waited until the waters of despair submerged his soul. . . . Then savagely he too plunged into death.

THE DAWN OF THE PASCH

THE DAWN OF THE PASCH

AROUND Jerusalem, the night succeeding the Sabbath was bright and the wind blew in warm gusts. Dim and distant lights trembled on the edge of the horizon. Puffs of wind rustled the leaves of the palm-trees and the giant cedars on the Mount of Olives—the one fertile spot in the barrenness which surrounded the Holy City. In the early Spring, this holy land is fragrant as a temple with the breath of myrrh, aloes and cinnamon, and at such a time one understands what the prophets meant when they sang of the mysterious hours of this ancient Orient in which "night to night shewed knowledge" of the glory of Jehovah.

On this night Gamaliel had been unable to rest. For him the Sabbath, which was ending, had been particularly heavy. He

had passed almost the entire day on the terrace of his dwelling, quiet, pensive and alone after the departure of the Sanhedrists, holding in his hands the rolls of the Holy Scripture which he no longer unrolled, and keeping his eyes fixed on Golgotha which rose desolate and forbidding without the walls. Absorbed in deep meditation, he probably saw therein things invisible to other eyes than his own. A profound melancholy cast a shadow over his countenance; and, when the hour of nocturnal prayer arrived, he repeated a psalm which one might think had no connexion with this highly solemn Sabbath. In an indistinct voice he repeated: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The very words that Golgotha had heard issue from other lips!

For even though Gamaliel had taken the first steps, even though he recognized in Jesus a prophet and a well-beloved of God, the uneasiness of doubt seized him when he questioned himself whether he was to give or to refuse to Him the awful title of Messias. All his anguish accumulated as he faced this question of questions, which he

might have formulated in the very words of the Baptist:

"Art thou He that is to come; or look we for another?"

John enquired thus at the opening of Christ's mission, when the story of His miracles and the spreading fame of His first triumphs were already reaching the confines of the desert inhabited by the Baptist. The ignominy and isolation of the death of Jesus, the desertion of the disciples, the cry of distress on the Cross—that cry which Gamaliel unconsciously wove into the joyful psalms of the Sabbath—all increased the doubts and seemed to justify the vacillation of the Pharisaic soul, cradled in dreams of glory and of pride. Viewed in this light, or rather under these new shadows, was not the question insoluble?

And yet, inasmuch as he was a master in Israel, inasmuch as he had caught a glimpse of "the edges of the abyss," Gamaliel could no longer divert his mind from the problem, however difficult its solution might be, however discouraging his inquiries. This Messias was the expectation of the whole people,

the explanation of its very existence, its hope of triumph and beauty. A mistake on this point was the most fearful imaginable—the most terrible likewise in its consequences. Thousands of years had gone to prepare for the coming of the Messias; thousands of years would doubtless follow it.

Not without terror could Gamaliel think that the turning-point of human history lay in the fulfilment of the promise made to Adam at the dawn of the world, the hope of which fulfilment Israel had ever preserved like a sacred fire. The world after *His* coming would no longer be what it had been before Him; it would be illuminated with another light, ruled by another sceptre:

"Arise, be enlightened, Jerusalem; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

All Jewish history with its long sequence of Divine gifts, its errors and chastisements, its repentance and pardon, its judges, kings and prophets, had been a preparation for the Messias, and without Him was meaningless. Therefore, what question could be so fraught with anxiety for Israel as that

which was at this moment being debated in the mind of the master?

And what made the problem personal and poignant was that the awesome event was to be made known to each individual in an intimate and personal way. According to his interior dispositions, Jesus had said, one would see, while another would be blind; one would be taken, and one would be left.

Had it indeed not happened thus? Caiphas, in his blind hate, believed that, in rejecting Jesus, he was doing the work of God; on the other hand, Joseph, Lazarus and Nicodemus, Sanhedrists or Doctors like Gamaliel, were becoming daily more and more convinced despite Gamaliel's doubts. Still nearer to him, Susanna had found the source of light in that Cross which, for Gamaliel, only increased the darkness.

Susanna! Without exceeding the number of paces permitted by the Law, Gamaliel had gone down several times to her apartment. Ever since they led her down from Calvary in the shadows of the "ninth hour," the young girl had lamented like Rachel, and would not be consoled. In vain did the

gentle and learned rabbi put forth all his tenderness to understand her; she did not even hear him. He could not speak the only words that she would have wished to hear—words of faith and words of hope. He felt his powerlessness keenly; a sort of anger entered his soul and rankled within him. He felt aggrieved at this young master, who proclaimed himself the "Son of God," and who had, through his tragic end, dug such an abyss of sorrow in so many hearts.

The darkness continued, although the Sabbath was long over. Gamaliel's time and movements were no longer controlled by the Law. Unable to endure his sleeplessness, his lonely inaction, and the sight of Susanna's tears, he set out from his dwelling.

Whither was he going? He could not have said. His measured steps sounded sharply on the narrow flags of the pavement. It was the only sound that broke the great silence; and the noise seemed to hammer on his temples and aggravate his irritation. What necessity was there to hide himself from others and to delude himself? Why did he hesitate as to the road to follow, going

on a little and returning irresolutely? And why, despite his vacillation, did he choose this road rather than any other? Why did he walk so slowly, with bowed head, along the road which the condemned man had traversed three days before? Why did he pause when, on the ground, he saw dark stains spotting the whiteness of the marbles? And, bending with anguished eyes over the bloody traces, why did he shudder with horror, while he murmured words of pity? . . .

A moment later, it is true, he raised himself to his full height, and gravely fastened on his left arm and on his forehead the phylacteries[1] engraved with Hebrew characters. Passages from Deuteronomy were inscribed on them; and on these awesome texts Gamaliel fixed his thoughts. Expelling every importunate memory from his brain, he repeated in Hebrew:

[1] Phylacteries were worn by the Jews to remind them of their early history and of their duty to observe the Law. They consisted of strips of parchment inscribed with Scriptural passages (especially Ex., xiii, 2–10, 11–17; Deut., vi, 4–9, 13–21) and enclosed in black calf-skin cases, which were provided with thongs for binding on the forehead and around the left arm.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."

These words he emphasized, as if he were hurling defiance at an adversary whom he dared not name. Was it his desire to defend the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob against another, a hitherto unknown God, who would usurp the adoration of which the Lord was jealous?

Passing beyond the walls through the heavy gates flanked with towers, Gamaliel came to a crossroads, and chose the stony path which between embankments led up to Golgotha. He had been walking for a long time, and the hours had hurried by without his noticing it. Everywhere there was now the freshness of dawn, and the virgin lights of the morn were illuminating this barren land. But Gamaliel, indifferent to the world around him, was still struggling with his tyrannical obsession. He thought:

"If only I could have met him remote from the crowd, and spoken with him alone as Nicodemus did! I would then have asked him: 'What sayest thou of thyself?'"

He paused, and his imagination pictured

to him Christ among His judges and executioners, answering to them: "I am the Son of God." The majesty of such an answer at such an hour, when Christ realized fully that death would be the penalty for pronouncing it, filled Gamaliel with a holy terror. He went on a little, speaking aloud to himself:

"Yes! He believed then that God would deliver him. But now that the Lord has let him die without succoring him, if—to suppose the impossible—he could hear me, he would no longer say: 'I am the Son of God.'"

"What then would he say?"

Why ask a man what he thinks of himself? Granting even his absolute sincerity, was he not liable to involuntary error concerning his person and his mission? How many had been mistaken! How many had dragged their dupes after them in the pursuit of a deceitful mirage! And yet Gamaliel's confidence in this young prophet was such that he would have questioned him as formerly the Baptist had been questioned: "Art thou the Christ?" He was convinced

that in the candor of his soul Jesus would have, like John—with greater certainty than John,—declared the truth, and would have declined an illusory homage. Why then, during the three long years of his ministry, had Gamaliel never spoken to him alone?

Had it been possible, were it only possible now, how eagerly he would have laid before him his tumultuous and contradictory thoughts!

Once more the force of tradition asserted itself within him, protesting against the uneasiness which harassed him. He strove to combine and formulate fatal objections:

"Could the Son of God possibly be like one of us—living our life, coming, going, and conversing with men, mingling freely with them? Was not this unworthy of His infinity? What do the prophets say on this point?"

Within him, despite himself, something replied:

"The Lord is pleased to confound us, and blinds us as to His designs and His counsels. He pens His work in gigantic letters which our weak eyes do but partially

decipher, and whose harmonious unity they never grasp. So is it in the case of Him whom God was to send. The prophets declare that He shall be the last of men, a man of sorrows rising 'as a root out of a thirsty ground'; but they also hail the Messias as a King who shall expand His empire to the confines of the earth and shall make His enemies His footstool. It is true that the Lord shall restore to Him the throne of David, His father. But is it not a spiritual throne that is meant? And is not this interpretation more exalted, more worthy of Him?"

Obstinately, however, the master replied:

"If he came to deliver us from the yoke of Rome, ought he to have lived among the illiterate and the populace? Should not he have mingled rather with the *élite* of the nation and with the leaders of thought? To frame the question is to answer it! What is the natural mode of acquiring dominion over men? Success wins the populace, while *we* are swayed only by the irrefutable proofs wherewith God, in His wisdom, convinces the wise."

He again paused, and drew a long breath as if satisfied that he had successfully answered a formidable objection. His triumph, however, was shortlived, for an interior voice resumed:

"If it be truly He—He, Adonaï!—why should He, on this threshold of His eternity, clothe Himself in those human rags which we dub riches and glory? Our intelligence and our knowledge too—are not they also but rags? Could one imagine the Son of God discussing, after the current fashion, this system or that when our greatest masters have solemnly reiterated on the threshold of the tomb that 'Nothing is better than silence'? What irony! Was the eternal truth to be regarded as a fit topic for our discussions! . . . Can it be that this explains his humility, his voluntary avoidance of us, the masters of Israel? Does it in fine befit the Messias better to be called rich, or to be called poor?"

Gamaliel grew ever more animated. He spoke aloud and couched his arguments in forcible terms as if answering a hidden adversary. He had mounted the last slopes of

Golgotha, and was advancing to the summit.

The Cross of Jesus stood out, gloomy and blood-stained, in the indistinct light of the dawn. With a gesture of sorrow, Gamaliel stretched his hands towards this sign in the desert, which was henceforth to assume a new significance, to become a symbol of benediction and eternal hope.

"Ah! if Jesus heard me, if he could hear me, I would call aloud to him: 'Behold the proof that you deceived me, that your divinity was but a dream. If you were the Son of God, you would not have come and departed without instituting anything, without leaving anything standing after you had gone! Could you have died—and died as a slave amid the hoots of the populace!—abandoned by God and by man? Our every hope, all that lately stirred within our souls and drew us in your footsteps, is dead—dead on this cross with you!'"

He paced uneasily to and fro. He would have sacrificed everything to lay his faith at the foot of the Cross with his tears. Perhaps his Pharisaic spirit had kept him too aloof?

Perhaps, owing to his pride, he had perceived, only dimly and at a distance, the very shadow of God? All the teaching, all the miracles of Jesus, and all his own remorse and anguish stormed Gamaliel's brain as he gazed on that blood-stained tree, just as memories and regrets surge up through our tears as we stand by the death-bed of a friend knit to us by tenderness and love. But peace did not enter Gamaliel's soul with the thoughts of this dead past. It seemed to him that He who was no longer, was challenging him to a truceless duel, was mocking his wisdom, his contentions and his proofs, was beating down each argument with an argument more pertinent and more profound, just as yonder, on the edge of the horizon, the whiteness of the dawn was extinguishing the stars, one by one, and was heralding the final victory of the still invisible sun.

Gamaliel's heart dwelt on the thought of this unremitting struggle. He even experienced in it a strange sweetness, as if it were a memory, an appeal from Him whose soul, according to Jewish belief, still hovered

on the confines of this world and the beyond. And, relinquishing further debate and surrendering himself without reserve to this vivid memory, he prayed:

"Thou wouldst not wish, if thou dost hear me, that I believe in thee merely because my heart is troubled at seeing within me the radiance of thy youthful countenance. Thou wouldst not wish that I believe because of the tears of Susanna or the faith of Joseph and Nicodemus; or even because thou didst speak as no man ever spake. . . . To root one's soul for ever, one needs something more, something other than human tenderness, condescension or admiration. These one gives to a man; but to the Messias! . . . to the Lord! . . .

"If thou wert God, one should believe in thee with a glorious and magnanimous faith for thine own sake aside from all alien reasons. Lo! my soul is open to thee. It trembles, it shudders in its darkness. I know that we are alone, thou and I, in this formidable duel. In thy presence I strip myself of all my past—all bias, all likes and dislikes; all that is fleeting I gladly surrender. My

soul stands naked and virginal before the Lord as when, in days gone by, He created it by His breath. I seek thee not to tempt thee, but to attain through thee to the truth. Make light shine from the very shadows of thy death, if thou canst do it, if thou dost hear." . . .

All was still: and no voice made answer. Overcome with emotion, Gamaliel turned his gaze towards the barren plain and on his left towards Jerusalem which slept half-buried in the mist, a white patch against the red of the surrounding country.

Once more he repeated: "All is dead."

Then a shudder seized him. He felt himself no longer alone. . . . He saw . . .

He clasped his forehead with both hands and closed his eyes—not able, not wishing to see *that*. . . . But an invincible power compelled him to remove his hands and to look.

A few steps away, on the very spot where the Cross arose, Christ was passing!

It was no shade or spectre, but truly He, Jesus of Nazareth, in all the splendor of a new life. His tortured body emitted an in-

definable radiance; a light not of this earth compassed Him, yet left Him the same. For an instant Gamaliel thought it a hallucination, and strove to banish it, but he gradually felt that his fears were foolish and that he was in full possession of his reason. He could distinguish all the familiar objects around him despite the first shock of astonishment; he saw the land and the rocks, the outline of the hills, and the distant blue of the Mountains of Moab. Nature around him was awaking as usual to the songs of birds, the bleatings of the sheep, the sporting of the kids in the grass, and the songs of the shepherds in the valleys below. But up here! —here on the bare hillside of Golgotha!— he beheld the Cross still imbued with blood, the blood-stains on the ground, and Jesus radiant and living before him.

Gamaliel would perhaps have preferred that the Lord should speak to him, as to his fathers, from a cloud; that He should call him up to the mountain-top as Abraham; that He should send an angel to him as to Jacob. Anything rather than see again Him who he knew had been crucified and slain

three days before; whom Joseph and Nicodemus had embalmed with aloes and myrrh, and had laid, ice-cold in death, within the tomb in the garden; and whose heart beat no longer under their hands, and through whose lips had already escaped the last breath of life!

Amid all his confusion of spirit, one sacred text arose in this mind impregnated with the Scriptures:

"Thou wilt not suffer Thy holy One to see corruption."

Gamaliel moved not! A holy fear seized him; he was enveloped and submerged in a holy joy. . . .

Where were now the weighty questions of this master in Israel? Why did he not pose them to Him whom just now he had invoked for an answer?

The Christ who reigneth and abideth halted, calm, gentle and serious. Doubtless, if Gamaliel had questioned, He, the eternal answer, would have replied! But His very presence blotted out every question; His resurrection cleared every doubt. He was no longer a man who might be cited before the

bar of proud human reason: He was the Lord who commands and wills; and how gloriously He had willed! He had hurled into the face of the world as a challenge the folly of His Cross, the scandal of His execution—disdaining the greatness, the wisdom and the knowledge of the world so that man might believe in Him for His own sake alone, as He had come down only "for us men and for our salvation."

His words had revealed all to His disciples. His example, the example of His life and death, fixed in their minds the features not alone of a God whom they were to adore, but also of a model which they were to imitate. Therein lay the point which Jewish reason had not grasped, could not grasp, until Jesus had enlightened it.

He had come down on earth for the sake of the faithful, to reveal to them the path they must follow—a path as novel as it was unknown. He Himself was the first to walk at the head of His elect along this previously untravelled path. After Him and like Him, His elect were to sacrifice themselves for the cause, to struggle and die for it even when

all seemed hopeless. They were to sow where others would harvest; to believe in God's love in the face of all seeming desertion and silence on the part of Him; to trust in Him even though their last cry of agony should resound through the darkness of a world hostile and unseeing; and all this, which seemed at first so uninviting but was to open wide the gates of the unseen world, was to be done with Him, near Him and for Him. How rapturous the prospect! . . .

Gamaliel traced this Divine plan which the resurrection now revealed as vividly as an image is reflected in clear crystal. He saw and believed. . . .

Because he saw, he believed. . . .

Yet Jesus had said:

"*Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.*"

CLAUDIA PROCLA'S DREAM

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I

PONTIUS PILATE, the Roman governor, lived in Herod's former palace, to the north-east of Jerusalem. It was by no means the least of Jerusalem's humiliations under Roman rule to see the conquering eagles planted on the walls of her dethroned kings. Herod, the Idumean, however, having received his price, made no trouble, and now occupied the old Machabee Palace. But, though the Roman procurator had supplanted him in his palace, Herod, as the nominal ruler, still gave his name to the splendid pile of buildings which were pointed out with pride as the Palace of Herod.

Strangers from the East, who came to Jerusalem for the festivals, were struck from afar by its three imposing towers and the massive walls of its threatening keep that rose abruptly two hundred feet above the val-

ley. Those who came from the West saw spread out before them the hanging gardens of the palace, bordered with cactuses, aloes and pink laurel-trees, and irrigated with streams of running water conveyed from the valley below. Flamingos sported at the water's edge in the cool of the evening, and, in the shady nooks under the shelter of the high walls, beds of violets and white iris perfumed the air.

This splendid palace revealed Herod's love of luxury in its cedar-panelled walls inlaid with beryl and precious stones, its marble columns and porticos draped with precious stuffs, and its woodwork carved into curious designs. Quaintly wrought lamps hung from its roof as in a temple, or stood on tall bronze pedestals; there were cushions and draperies in profusion, and curtains worth ten times their weight in gold. Everything spoke of an extreme luxuriousness not to be met with in other lands.

In the *Gynæceum*—Roman names were studiously retained in this Asiatic palace—cedar-oil night-lights in alabaster lamps shed a dim light throughout that long Nisan

night. An ivory couch, with purple coverlet, stood on a thick carpet; oval mirrors and low seats were ranged around the room; flagons of Tyrian wine stood on copper trays, and a table was laden with bowls of sweetmeats and rare fruits. Slaves were charged with the details of this luxury, but Claudia Procla valued it not at all.

Nothing indeed could be less in harmony with such surroundings than Pilate's wife; no one could be less at home in such a country and amid such a people. Serious and cold, haughty of look, and proud of bearing, she had reached the age when mere beauty of body too often fades, but when beauty of character shining from the soul within takes on a surer charm.

Yes, Claudia Procla's character was more in keeping with the stern virtues of early Rome than with the effete corruptions of the Orient. She might have served as a type of the strong race from which she was sprung. Yet there were no *lares*[1] in her room, and she had had removed the bronze tripods in

[1] One of the classes of household gods worshipped by the Romans.

which it was customary to burn incense; even the exquisite ivory statues which kept watch over the hearth in the home of every Roman matron had been banished. It was whispered of her that she favored the worship of the Unseen God, and that she had cut adrift from the cult of all other divinities.

Seated in one of the Roman chairs which she had placed about the room in her dislike for the Oriental fashion of cushions and mats, she let her eyes stray idly from object to object. Though outwardly calm, she was as white as a statue on the tombs along her own *Via Appia*. She had dismissed her attendants, but the couch on which she was wont to sleep so peacefully lay undisturbed; and, if in the silence of her vigil she dozed for an instant, she immediately sat bolt upright with a shudder. She was like one afraid of her dreams. To overcome her sleepiness she finally arose, and, covering her hair with a veil of the same rich material as her robe, went down the steps that led into the garden.

It was the second watch of night. The moon shed a cold light on the swaying palm-

trees and silhouetted their leaves on the grass and on the marbles of the narrow walks. A breeze stole through the foliage, and came freighted with a faint odor of nard.

Claudia Procla walked up and down hesitatingly, trembling at the least sound—at the distant hoot of the owls in the Valley of the Dead below. It seemed to her that time was dragging leaden-footed, until the sound of the lictors grounding their fasces on the flags of the court warned her that Pontius Pilate had returned. She then halted.

The palace caught the glare of the torches. The clean-shaven face and close-cropped head of the Procurator stood out against the ruddy flame. He was on his way back from the Antonia, the fortress commanding the Temple, where he usually stayed during the festivals to be prepared for a possible uprising, and where the Roman garrison was always quartered.

This was the second time he had stayed there during the night, and he was now returning towards morning, perhaps to avoid meeting Claudia.

She went straight towards him, and met him just as he entered the *atrium*. On seeing her he seemed amazed and annoyed, but saluted her, saying:

"Hail, Claudia Procla!"

II

He seated himself on a stone bench, while she stood erect before him. He had staved off as long as possible this explanation which he knew he must face sooner or later, but which he would gladly have avoided. It could not be helped: better get it over now. He knew Claudia's noble nature. She would tell him what she thought once and for all, but would not later tease and nag as other women might. He knew that she was far above him, and in his heart he had conceived for her a sort of wondering veneration with which worldly pride and superstitious terror were mingled.

"Hail, Lady!" he repeated.

He half rose and held out his hand, but she recoiled as at the touch of something unclean.

"So, you have abandoned the Nazarene!" she sobbed. "You have killed him!"

"It has been my misfortune to cause you displeasure, Lady. Yet I am sure your wisdom will make allowance when you hear all the circumstances. I did all that I could. I sent you in reports hour by hour. To begin with, I tried to avoid having to hear the case myself; so I sent him as a Galilean to Herod the Tetrarch under whose jurisdiction he came. But Herod sent him back to me clad in a fool's robe, whereupon I announced to the multitude that neither Herod nor I found any cause in him for death.

"Then, in an effort to have him released, I put him up side by side with Barabbas. Barabbas, you know, is an unpopular wretch, a common murderer; and I somehow thought that on account of the good the Nazarene had done I was opening a loophole for his disciples to swing the feeling of the crowd in his favor—all the more so as their recent hosannahs and processions and palms seemed to suggest his popularity.

"It is clear that I have not yet fathomed the character of these Jews. When the

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priests get their claws on their prey, they never let go. So they sent partisans of theirs among the crowd to shout for Barabbas. Then what could I do? I had him flogged, thinking they would be appeased at the sight of his wounds, giving them blood since they shouted for blood. But they yelled all the more for his death.

"You see, Claudia, I did all I could. To bring the matter home to them more clearly, I even went so far as to borrow some of their customs and formulæ, for I washed my hands before them and repeated words that are more or less strange to me: 'I am innocent of the blood of this just man.'

"That is the only sort of language they understand. They do not use straightforward phrases. They are all born quibblers. When I asked the Scribes and ancients and priests: 'What accusation bring you against this man?' they quibbled in their reply: 'If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee.' That was no answer to my question. Then I said to the Nazarene himself: 'Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to

release thee?' What was his answer? 'Thou wouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above.'

"I had not asked whether I held my power from Jupiter or from Mercury; and what difference could it possibly make to a man in his position—a man I could have freed or put to death!"

"Quite so!" replied Claudia fiercely. "That is your crime. You could have freed him, and you ought to have freed him. You knew he was innocent!"

"Innocent! Can one ever declare who is innocent?" asked Pilate flippantly. "I thought he was quite harmless. The charges against him were silly—a tissue of absurdities. He intended forsooth to destroy the Temple in three days! Now if he said that, it was a fool's saying. Just look at the Temple!" and Pilate pointed out its giant mass sleeping in the moonlight.

"They said also that he wanted to prevent the payment of tribute to Cæsar. Now that was more serious, but it was not proved. Then that he said he was a king and the Son of God. I should like to see our friends in

Rome accuse a man and demand his death for such nonsense as that. They would simply have shrugged their shoulders as I did. They might have advised him to have done with such nonsense; yet hardly, since he was careful to declare that his kingdom was not of this world. But that would be all. But here among these dregs of humanity it takes blood and death to wipe out things like that!"

"It was your duty to defend him," replied Claudia coldly. "You speak of Rome? Rome set you here to uphold her wisdom, not to lower her repute by carelessness or cowardice."

"Pardon me one minute!" said Pilate. "I have just said that as procurator I found no crime in him. That is true. But the priests who asked for a guard that they might go and arrest him, told me a number of very disturbing things. This man has been going about preaching detachment from material possessions, and to win adherents, he has been spreading the most absurd stories. He has moreover been upsetting the people with his prophecies and parables. Among other

things he told them that a man who wears purple and fine linen will go into a pit of flames just for wearing purple and fine linen and for ignoring a beggar at his gate; while the beggar, just because he is a beggar, will be carried off to the Elysian fields. He said that whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it; that we all ought to live without concern for the morrow, like the birds of the air and the flowers in the garden; that the prince of this world is already judged; and that if we are to walk rightly, we must leave father and mother and children and follow him. He holds that we ought to show mercy to everyone, even publicans and courtesans!"

"How shall he teach me to have mercy?" murmured Claudia, and the whole soul of paganism seemed echoed in these words.

"Now, how can any reasonable state of society be founded on such ideas?" continued Pilate, unheeding. "I put it to you very frankly: sophists, like this man, are a positive danger in any state."

"Pontius," said Claudia Procla gravely, "you did not think so until they mentioned Tiberius. That is where your gods were

waiting for you. You did all you could for Jesus of Nazareth, I admit, as long as it cost you nothing. But as soon as your own skin was endangered, as soon as you were threatened ever so vaguely, you succumbed. You betrayed that man because you were afraid."

"Suppose it is so," replied Pilate cynically. "Tiberius is not such a true friend of ours. What do you know about the hatred of the chief men here, and the accusations they are capable of making? Do you want to see me under suspicion, called home perhaps—for that old tyrant in Caprea is easily influenced—and stripped of rank, riches and renown? Do you want to lose this palace where you are a queen, and all for the sake of a peasant they meant to kill, and would kill in spite of me in some fashion or another? Claudia, where now is your vaunted wisdom?"

She stood erect, her blazing eyes fixed on her seated husband who seemed to shrivel under her gaze.

"Wretch!" she exclaimed, "because some one was bound to be guilty of his death, was that a reason why the one should be you? You confess that this luxury around me is

bought by his blood, yet you think that I shall still go on enjoying it? You know me little, Pontius. You have never known me. I asked this thing of you, and you have refused me. It was indeed for his sake, but it was also for your own that I made my request."

"For my sake?" echoed Pilate in surprise. "Well—yes! It did go against my grain to condemn him. But in a short time it will be all forgotten. To-morrow I shall have forgotten it myself. . . . At least I hope so."

He rambled on as though trying to salve his own conscience:

"I took a deep interest in the man. He said some strange things. And, though his words were always cryptic, they sounded noble as they fell from his lips. For instance: 'I was born that I should give testimony to the truth.' I thought of you, Claudia, when I asked him: 'What is truth?'

"But I had to go away without waiting for his answer, so disturbed was I by the way he looked at me. He has more courage than any man I ever saw. He never once

begged me, even by a word, to let him go. In the very midst of the din and shouts against him I said to him:

"'Answerest thou nothing? Behold in how many things they accuse thee.'

"I wanted him to defend himself, but he kept silent. Then you sent me word about your dream."

"Speak not of my dream!" pleaded Claudia in terror, as though the very thought of it was a cruelty.

"Was it so very alarming?" asked Pilate, trying to hide his concern. "Some bad omen? Some misfortune ahead? Worse still—death?"

This stern Roman, who just now had spoken so flippantly of Him he had sentenced to death, and who banished the memory of his action so lightly—this hardy Roman was shivering now at the thought of this impending "omen" which seemed to threaten him like an armed hand in the dark. He had but little belief in gods or in a future life, but he was filled with superstitions. Such a thing was quite usual in the Roman Empire, where Pliny tells us "the bravest minds

looked on dreams as direct warnings from the gods."

Claudia remained silent and horror-stricken, replying with a nod to the governor's questions.

"Speak!" he implored. "Anything is better than this uncertainty and mystery."

"I can't . . . I can't . . . out of pity for you," she sobbed at length. "I have kept it from you till now. The harm is done, and we cannot help it. Let us try to forget it."

The moonlight was shining on the marble pillars of the atrium, and Pontius Pilate was pacing up and down, his shadow coming and going on the polished stone. He had no love for those times when a man's evil genius seems to be haunting him; and his uneasiness grew every moment. He feared to enquire what this awful portent might be. Yet he longed to know. He had brought with him to Judea a Roman priest skilled in the stars and in augury, and every day he questioned him. That very evening he had sent for him to come to the Antonia, and together they had consulted the omens far into the night.

Pilate kept his superstitions as secret as possible from his wife, being ashamed of his weakness. But this very evening the frightened priest had refused to follow any longer the conjunctions of the stars, and had turned away in alarm on inspecting the entrails of the victims.

"Come," said Pilate turning at last to Claudia. "Speak, I adjure you by the gods —by the God of the Jews, if you think he is nearer than our own gods; tell me, did you see this man in your dream?"

Claudia's lips quivered. She was about to refuse, but Pilate adjured her in the name of the living God, and she felt it would be blasphemy to resist any longer.

III

THE palace shook violently, and the pillars rocked to and fro. It was all so suddenly over that it might have been thought an illusion, had not the watchers within and the guards without cried out in terror.

Claudia said very softly:

"Is that the first strange thing you have

noticed since his death? When daylight comes, I shall explain."

"Behold! it is now day," said Pilate, pointing towards a whitening ray climbing up behind the bare hills. "You did see this man?"

"I did not know that it was this man," she answered gravely. "We were in Rome, in Cæsar's palace. The emperor was taking a census of the world. He spoke with pride of his many subjects, comparing them to the stars in the sky or the sands on the seashore. A man clothed in white came in, and the light from his body illuminated the place. He spoke: 'All these men and women are mine.'

"Augustus had him driven out with contumely. Whither he went, I do not know—away anywhere, into the far-off desert. The Roman world forgot him. But here he was going about curing the sick, and speaking of his kingdom in a vague sort of way as of something mysterious and remote. Then he was betrayed and arrested. It was Jesus of Nazareth."

"You had heard people speak of him," said

Pilate, more or less reassured. "All that 's easily explained."

"Wait," said Claudia. "He seemed to be coming down from a high mountain followed by his persecutors and executioners, and to be going towards a cross set up on the Capitol. And, as he walked, he passed through the midst of the human race which he had said belonged to him. A passage was made for him, and to each and every man on his way he put the same question at some time or other during life: 'Wilt thou choose me above all else?'

"And, according to the various characters of the men whom he addressed, the meaning was: 'Wilt thou sacrifice riches or pleasure or pride for the sake of the one thing necessary—for the sake of Him who is Beauty and Justice and Holiness?'

"What different emotions stirred that crowded throng! Some drew away from him with curses and hatred, especially those who worshipped their flesh, or who had betrayed him through greed or through fear.

"Others—a countless number—remained indifferent, and neither heard nor saw him,

for their outlook was directed towards this present life alone. But other some gave up all to follow him, and they were the happy ones of earth whom he loves and who love him.

"No matter how large the family of man may grow, each member of it passes before him, and not one goes into the valley of the shadow of death without having heard the mysterious question and given it an answer."

"Oh! All this Oriental imagery has been too much for you," said Pilate. "Our Latin genius does not take to it easily, and, when it gets a hold on us, it distorts and unbalances our minds. Why, the very phrases you use are to be found in their prophets: 'The Lord comes!', 'the Lord goes by!', 'He holds the earth like a drop of water in the hollow of his hands!' You must surely have heard these things around the synagogues, and unconsciously you have mixed them up with this Jesus who was said to be the Messias."

The Roman Procurator breathed more easily. He could view without apprehension the stars which shone so menacingly just now, but were gradually fading before the soft rays of the dawn.

IV

"Hold!" said Claudia. "I awoke suddenly, and it seemed to me that a crowd of men were going noisily by, uttering curses and yells of hatred. I then sank into a deep slumber once more, and I beheld this man before you. It was in your power to save him or to ruin him. It was your hour, the hour he had chosen for you out of all hours. You are not cruel; you are not bad by nature; but you are weak, and you dread the loss of the material things which now lull your soul to sleep. Jesus of Nazareth was there before you, trying to lead you to a higher life. He said: 'My Kingdom is not of this world,' so as to help you to overcome the suggestions of flesh and blood. I saw him . . . I see him . . . murmuring words of pardon—of that pardon which he longs to extend to everyone. He is clad in white and he speaks slowly. His long hair like ripe corn is parted over his brow and falls down on his shoulders. His thoughtful look follows every movement you make."

"That is indeed he!" said Pilate.

"I begged you to save him. All that was good in you, your mercy and love of justice, begged with me. You hesitated. To free him you did all these things that you have told me; but he was waiting for you to rise above yourself—to sacrifice yourself, no matter what the consequences, for the sake of Justice and Truth. That is what you did not do . . . you betrayed him."

Claudia's last words ended in a sob.

"What then?" urged Pilate curtly.

"Do not force me to go on," she begged.

"Then, he took vengeance on me, eh? He killed me?"

"Ah! more than that. You had betrayed him to his enemies; he gave you up to yourself. Your remorse for your crime grew, imperceptibly at first, but surely, and clung to you like the shirt of Nessus till it burned to the marrow of your bones. The Emperor dismissed you and exiled you to an obscure town, where you dragged out your joyless days until a death without hope came and delivered you."

"Was I alone there? Had you abandoned

me, and followed this Galilean the better to despise me?" questioned Pilate bitterly.

"That I may follow him and win your pardon, I shall remain faithful to you," she answered. "I speak as a pagan, for I am a pagan; but he always spoke words of mercy. I have no mercy or pity; but, for his sake, your country shall be my country as in days gone by."

"All that," muttered Pilate like a man in a nightmare, "all that has n't come to pass yet. The future may be averted by gifts to the gods. . . ."

"Gifts to the gods are unavailing," she answered. "Your name is for ever linked with that of the Nazarene. Cities will crumble to dust; kings and empires will pass away; Rome will no longer rule the world; but you will go down through all the ages linked with him. From generation unto generation you will point to him, the man of meekness, bleeding under his crown of thorns, with his reed sceptre in his hand; and you will say mockingly: 'Behold the man!'

"And those who love him will scorn you, and those who hate him will turn their backs

on you, for you will be for ever the symbol of cowardice, meanness, and calculating self-interest."

"Claudia!" shouted Pilate hoarsely.

"And I, Pilate's wife. . . . I also have to suffer. In me begins the long line of unhappy women who place the pride of their lives in the honor of a man when that honor is no more. They are the people who deserve sympathy. . . . I have never uttered one reproach to you. I have never blamed you for your public acts or for your private life which has so clouded and dimmed your conscience. I have never shown jealousy, or anger, or suspicion—the vices of a courtesan. I have asked primarily your respect and that you have given me.

"But I also asked above everything else that the honor of your name should be unsullied. Therein you have failed. You have degraded the blood of the Claudii which flows in my veins, and of which I was overproud.

"Others after me will have to undergo these same torments, in public or in private; and better were it for them had they never

been born. To despise the husband one ought to respect, is to suffer daily the torture invented by one of our emperors, that of having a corpse bound to one's live body.

"Would therefore that my words might reach those about to walk where I must walk! I would cry out to them: 'Forfeit the friendship of Cæsar, and wealth and all human dignities, and your daily bread if necessary; but be not false to truth, and do not betray Jesus of Nazareth to his enemies. It is Pilate's wife who speaks and knows.' "

She ceased exhausted, and the tears coursed down her pale cheeks. Pilate drew his hand across his eyes, and tried to regain self-control in the midst of his conflicting and cruel emotions. Instinctively he put aside all minor details, and remembered only the exile and death which he must at all hazards avoid. Then he thought of the shame that would be his throughout the ages, even when he would be dead! But why should he believe all this? Was it not merely a dream?

. . . . . .

Bright dawn was driving away the terrors of night, and at the same time his superstí-

tious fears. A gentle and fragrant breeze was coming up from the gardens, the first rays of the sun were being caught in the sparkling fountains, and were casting a noose of golden light around the pinnacles of the Temple. Pilate recovered himself with an effort. His blunt, but legal mind phrased a decisive objection.

"I regret everything that has brought you this grief, Lady, but let your own high intelligence not abandon you now. Everything you have said would have been cruel if Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Eternal Living God. But he is living only in your dream. In reality he is dead. I myself have seen the men who took him down from the Cross. His tomb is sealed with my seal, and my soldiers are on guard there now."

Then he added with a weary smile:

"The dead sleep well and long."

V

A BUSTLE was heard among the guards outside: the soldiers were talking excitedly one to another. Then a breathless decurion ap-

peared followed by some men of his cohort, who were haggard with emotion and trembled at the knees.

"My lord," said the decurion, "here are the soldiers set as a guard over the Galilean's tomb. They come in flight and breathless. The shock just now hurled them flat to the ground, and they are telling unheard-of tales. The sealed tomb has been opened: how they know not; and lo! *it is empty.*"

WHO SHALL ROLL US BACK
THE STONE OF THE
SEPULCHRE?

WHO SHALL ROLL US BACK THE STONE OF THE SEPULCHRE?

I

WHAT was the belief of the disciples after Christ's death?

Were their hopes all buried under the stone of that sepulchre? And, weeping their lost Master, did they forget to think of Him as the Messias?

Their faith in Christ, the Son of the Living God, remained intact. In one sense, His suffering and death had only strengthened their belief. All that had taken place He had foretold in the greatest detail, and He had repeated it over and over again, whenever a triumph, or an unexpected manifestation such as the Transfiguration, or a passing outburst on the part of the crowd as on Palm Sunday, might have led them to forget.

He had willed it all; it was His mission.

And though in the dismay of the first shock they had fled,—for death always comes with a shock no matter how much we may expect it, a shock all the greater when it was Jesus who died,—yet the majority of the disciples neither doubted entirely, nor fully believed, but waited in anguish and trepidation.

What were they awaiting?

Perhaps some victorious proclamation such as was to herald the second coming of the Son of Man in all His power and majesty, as He had foretold!

Yet, if we read the accounts given by the Evangelists, it would seem as if Christ's friends never dreamt of a resurrection such as actually took place. The refusal to believe Magdalen and the two Marys when they told of what they had seen; Peter and John believing only when they saw the empty tomb, "for as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise from the dead" (John, xx, 9); the care shown by the holy women in preparing the spices to embalm His body: all this goes to prove that, "foolish and slow to believe," they had not grasped the meaning of the words of the Lord.

The story of Thomas helps us to see this most clearly.

When the other disciples told him they had seen the Lord, he refused to credit them, and would not be convinced until he had put his hand into the opened side, and his fingers into the place of the nails in His hands and feet. Thus, by showing us very plainly the state of mind of the Apostles, their demand for proof has furnished the most convincing imaginable testimony to succeeding ages.

In one heart, however, faith in the Resurrection shone undimmed like a pure alabaster lamp in the darkness. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, remembered and believed.

We know nothing of the depth of her agony during the betrayal, the flagellation and the crucifixion; nor can we realize what it is to love a son who is God, or how unutterable is the sorrow this double love brings.

It is given us to see only the surface of the events.

We see Mary accompanying Jesus to His death on Calvary—Mary, whose smile welcomed His coming into the world in all the

happy desolation of the stable, when the angels carolled His praises and the simple shepherds brought their gifts.

There, her arms were around Him, to shelter Him in her shabby robe against the bleak cold of the world. At least He was safe and snug, pressed close to her bosom!

But now that He was passing away, mocked by those whom He wished to save, rejected and tortured and put to death by them, she was helpless. Her arms could no longer shield this Son of her flesh and of her heart. During His last hours Christ's feeble head rose and fell, but found no resting-place; tears and blood flowed down His cheeks, but she might not wipe them away. Every movement in the vicinity of the Cross was to her the signal for some new torture, some added insult. . . .

Surely she must have been completely merged in the divine act that was being consummated, or she could never have lived during the succeeding days among His murderers and betrayers without cursing or hating them!

There she stood, and He knew it was all

that she might do. His eyes sought hers, and she returned His gaze, asking pardon for her helplessness and offering Him as a silent oblation all the love of her heart.

She never doubted for an instant. She made no effort to check the superhuman outpouring of her soul. She joined with Him in His heroic immolation; and her soul that knew and freely united itself with His offering was the one ray of light through the dark cloud of human ingratitude. Her love, in which there was no trace of human selfishness, mounted up to Him as human love had never done before. Nor could it be otherwise in that heart of hers, purer than the heart of any created being had ever been.

No, Mary was not scandalized that He should suffer, that He should allow unutterable sorrow to pierce her heart. What He willed was good; His will was ever to be adored. She doubted neither Him nor His work. What did it matter if all seemed lost and ruined and destroyed? What did it matter if He left her shrouded in incomprehensible darkness? Out of that darkness the Son of God, her Son also, was calling to her;

and she was following as He led. She asked for no miracle now, if He did not so will it.

She felt He was gloriously triumphant in this apparent failure, and her adoration became more utter, her union with Him more close.

And when all was over, and this Mother of Sorrows went away with John, belief was as secure in her breaking heart as is in the height of the tempest the halcyon's nest, which, borne on the flaky crest of the waves or tossed in their stormy troughs, is never for an instant submerged.

II

But what of the others? What of John, the friend of Jesus, and what of Magdalen? And what of the unnamed crowd whose disappointment was all the greater because their hopes had been set so high?

Among the women on Calvary, Susanna stood a little way off in the shadow of some rocks, unwilling to leave Him and yet unable to endure the anguish of witnessing His agony.

She was all-unconscious of the sneers and angry glances that were levelled at her; she did not ask herself what she, a daughter of the Jewish doctors, was doing at this place of execution. or how she dared to remain there.

Such human thoughts were swept away in the greatness of her desolation, as withered branches before the wintry wind. The disturbance within her soul overwhelmed her. The revelation of the Deity, which had suddenly dawned upon her mind, added to her fright and made it impossible for her to comprehend. Hers was not the superhuman serenity of Mary, or the passionate vehemence of Magdalen, but the artless and tender love of a child. Why should He suffer such tears and blood and insult? The very thought crushed her; and she seemed to be waiting for *something* from the darkness? What she expected, she could not say, but she looked for a revelation, a miracle—something that would give Him back to her blessed and living, as in the days when she spoke to Him in the garden where the roses and asphodels and lilies bloomed.

But it was not to be. She heard but His panting breath and the slow and heavy drip of His blood like summer rain. . . .

In her utter confusion she kept thinking as best she could her poor, broken, disjointed thoughts. Would they let Him die? Surely some one would come and deliver Him? Perhaps the Lord was waiting for the very last moment, as in the case of the children in the fiery furnace? Yes, He would surely come. . . .

She glanced about her, and besought the holy women with wild pleadings:

"Where are they whom He healed? Where are they all? If only they wished . . ."

She awaited no reply, but went on repeating mechanically snatches from the Psalms: "The Lord will come; . . . The Lord cometh in the clouds. . . . The Lord hath delivered me . . ."; but she seemed to hear the words away in the distance, as though wide desert spaces separated her from her own soul.

Then she tried to forget them as mocking her anguish, but they came back again and

again like the melancholy burden of a flute-player's air in a funeral procession.

And, when He uttered His last cry, she lifted up her hands as though to ward off some terrible reality. Dreading to be convinced that the end had come, she dared not raise her eyes to His face; but she grew affrighted as she noticed that His feet had stiffened and quivered no more.

Never afterward could she quite recall the alarm that froze her soul within her, nor could she ever explain how she summoned strength at last to lift up her eyes; and though she had never seen death, she yet realized that this must be it, and that its solemn serenity had enthroned itself on His rigid countenance.

Then she fled away, brokenhearted.

But, with every flying step she took, she felt she must go back to Him. What if they were already taking Him down from the Cross! What if she were never again to see Him! But she had no longer the strength to return, or to control her tears and sobs. Friends and enemies of His were still around His Cross, and she could not weep aloud. She

could not bewail Him and invoke Him while others were near. In spite of the storm of anguish that swept over her, she still retained her instinctive sense of the sacredness of tears. She must be alone—in her own home—for tears.

When she did reach home, and had "closed the door on the wrath of the Lord," she buried her head in the pillows and sobbed aloud: "He is dead, dead . . .," feeling that she had lost everything in losing Him.

A day passed; and, as time wore on, her need of seeing Him again, of doing something for Him, grew imperious. There was nothing left but His tomb—*His* tomb!—and she did not even know where that was or how to reach it. For the first time she would have to go with the others! And where now were those women who had followed Him from Galilee—Magdalen and the two Marys and the Mother of the Lord? She lingered over those last words, whose very sound brought her an unwonted peace in her great sorrow. Mary would have pity on her! Mary was always so full of pity.

Under cover of the darkness she stole out.

She knew where John lived, and she felt she would find Mary there. She crept in timidly, and found the women busily preparing spices to take to the sepulchre. The very sight of this commonplace of Jewish mourning, instead of solacing her sorrow, seemed but to intensify it by giving her a material proof that all was over—that it was really true, and that He was no more!

She made an effort to join in their busy preparations, and took some sprigs of hyssop in her hands; but it was to no purpose. She had been mistaken in thinking that it would be sweet to do this task for Him.

In a short time she withdrew, blinded by her tears, and went into another room, seeking Mary but not daring to ask for her. So busy were they all, and so eager to be in readiness for the early dawn at the sepulchre, that no one noticed what she did.

Hidden under her veil, she was seated in a corner weeping when a motherly hand rested on her head as in blessing, and the caress of that touch thrilled her as sympathy always thrills the very young who find their sorrows understood.

It was Mary's hand. Susanna took it and kissed it, between her sobs. Gradually the young girl's distress abated, and was succeeded by a strange serenity. She thought of the depth of the silent sorrow of that Virgin Mother, and blushed at her own selfish thoughtlessness while her tongue tried to falter: "How you must suffer!" Mary caressed her very gently; but she whom no human word could comfort was silent as to her own sorrow; no glimpse of its yawning depths was given.

Mary whispered the words of Jesus that Susanna had so often heard: "Weep not." No one could repeat His words quite like His Mother; and, far from increasing her distress, the memory of the Master's voice and words drove away the clouds and brought a solace to the girl's crushed heart. For a while the compassionate Mother remained with the maiden, and then they went in together to the room where the other women were assembled.

Morning was at hand, and Mary's composure became more and more serene. She seemed like one who treasured the secret of

inner peace; a light seemed to emanate from her and to increase with every instant.

The messengers of dawn were lighting up the summit of Moriah and the tops of the turrets, and were dispersing the darkness of the night.

III

Susanna joined the other women who were setting out for the tomb. They were Johanna, the two Marys, and the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee. Not to attract attention, they divided into several groups. In the impatience of her love Magdalen ran on ahead alone. Susanna on the other hand remained with those in the rear, fearful yet anxious to reach that tomb where she would see Him indeed, but Him voiceless and lifeless evermore!

Could she see Him thus and her recent anguish not return and overwhelm her? But they were going to Him, and how could she remain behind?

Outside the walls the stony path was bordered with rows of wild fig-trees. No woods, or green fields, or harvests were to be

seen anywhere, but only bare mountains and the barren soil. Aloes struggled for life between the boulders, and blue thistles and tufts of asphodels jutted up here and there with the dew of night still clinging to their stalks.

In the desolation of His soul, the gaze of the Condemned had rested on this desolate scene. He had gone up this very way. Here He had fallen under His Cross. There He had consoled the weeping women of Jerusalem. He had spoken to them, and it almost seemed ages ago, for now He spoke no longer. Evermore, they felt, they must think of Him as they saw Him dead. Susanna with a shudder tried to think of Him thus, and to call up the image of His closed eyes and parted lips; but she could remember only His gesture when He blessed, His call when He had won her, and the words that He had spoken. She wanted to see Him again, but not hurriedly like this, not for a brief instant. Yet probably they would open His tomb no more; and, when she next passed down this road and past these giant aloes, all would be over. She would have seen

Him—and then never again till they met in eternity.

The holy women were all thinking their individual thoughts, recalling the last time they had seen Him, and planning how best to carry out their hurried embalming. They said but little to one another, or spoke of indifferent things, as people do to veil their real thoughts. Suddenly one of them stopped, and asked abruptly:

"Who shall roll us back the stone of the sepulchre?"

They all came to a halt. True. Why had they not thought of it before? They would never be strong enough to do it! Jewish tombs were little cells cut into the rock on a level with the ground or on a gentle slope, where the bodies rested horizontally in niches; the door was a large slab, and it required several men and a lever to move it. The holy women were sorely puzzled. What were they to do? Must they go back, and seek out some of the disciples? No, it was too late. Day was at hand, and they would be seen and perhaps hindered at a later hour. Besides, their love brooked no delay. . . .

Perhaps some early passer-by would help them!

So they journeyed sorrowfully to their dead Christ, bearing their spices in trembling hands, expecting nothing, hoping for nothing but to pay Him the last sad rites. And even in this mournful duty they were thus confronted with a fresh disappointment.

"Who shall roll us back the stone of the sepulchre?" That was all they thought of! . . .

. . . . . .

His enemies slept in peace. Jesus had died an ignominious death. He had been buried. They had made quite certain of that. Pilate, the chief priests and Caiphas, those who had held back and those who had been ring-leaders in the plot against him—all alike were glad to be rid of His importunate presence. He would uncover no more hypocrisies; henceforth He would never sit in judgment on anyone. He would no longer stir up the people. He would never again disturb quiet lives and doubting souls by His words or by the searching look He directed towards

them, as for instance He had disconcerted Pilate after his flippant question: "What is truth?"

How very like the story of mankind it all was! From century to century, the emperors of Rome, the apostates, the barbarians, the heretics, public opinion and all the rest have gone to sleep, congratulating themselves that they have done their work thoroughly. But each and every one in turn has been crushed and conquered by the irresistible power of Jesus of Nazareth, when each and everyone has thought that He and His disciples were at last utterly routed. And it all takes place so very quietly! The story of the world was indeed epitomized on Calvary.

Why was there that vague fear of something strange and alarming? No prodigy had marked His dying hour. He had not taken up their taunts; He had struck no one to the ground. He had not protected His friends any more than He had protected Himself, but had remained inactive and silent during their anguish as throughout His own.

In His silence and shame the souls of friends and foes alike grew bolder—bolder in love and confidence and bolder in hate. Yet He was silent.

"Let be. . . . Let be. . . . See if the Lord will come."

Yes. . . . Let be! . . . Your taunt is vain, for He is dead. . . . The light has gone out on the Cross.

"Let us seal the tomb and put a guard around it."

It is done, and night comes down on the mystery of the tomb.

If His timid friends should come and try to steal His body so as to boast that a prodigy has taken place, the law and the soldiers of Rome are there on guard, and all such attempts will be utterly foiled.

Then a footstep is heard in the dark, and lo! He appears living and glorified.

He does not come when and where we looked for Him before defeat, before death; for what matters time or place to Him who is Life itself. He makes Himself manifest, not as timid human hearts beseech Him, not relying on some chance passer-by to roll

away the stone and allow a corpse to be secretly embalmed.

Christ is no longer there. The tomb guarded by His enemies is as empty as their own impious dream.

And so it has been from century to century with the fools who never learn the lesson. They all, at some time or another, set a seal on their own defeat—and *the Eternal laughs at them!*

IV

A GENTLE breeze was stealing over the anemones. The garden slept in peace—an oasis of olives and palms in a desert world, while in between the trees were seen the leafless shrubs of Palestine with their wealth of red and blue flowers.

Cyclamens, lilies with their drooping chalices, mimosas, narcissi and violets were budding under the oaks. Doves were aflutter in the new dawn. It was a sweet resting-place. Joseph long ago had prepared his tomb in the shade of these trees and amid the fragrance of these flowers; and he had made over to the Lord this "place of silence"—this

"abode for eternity," as the Sacred Books called it.

Seeing the tomb there near the gate among the myrtles, the pious women hurried on, but then drew back in amazement. The tomb was open and the grave was empty!

The Gospel insists on their amazement. It tells us of the apparition and what the angels said. It tells how some of them "went out quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, running to tell His disciples"; and how others were seized with a fear and trembling, and "they said nothing to any man, for they were afraid."

Susanna remained behind. What were men or angels to her who sought the Lord of angels? She only remembered what Mary, the mother of James, had said: "You will find that He liveth." She stopped breathless for an instant at the edge of the tomb—not trembling or afraid, but bewildered by this sudden joy after her deep sorrow. She did not speak—even to Peter and John who came hurriedly from Jerusalem, or to Magdalen who wandered weeping about the tomb.

Gradually she became aware of the splendor of the morning. She lifted her radiant eyes towards the sunshine filtering through the leaves of the cedars; she saw the doves sporting among the blossoms; and she heard the chatter of sparrows mingled with the confused murmurs of the awaking day.

How fair the earth was!—this earth which for two days past had seemed so deserted and forlorn!

Susanna thought of Galilee whither Christ was preceding them, and where she had first seen Him; and the memory of His words was like new light to her soul. Why had she not waited? Why had she not understood? Mary, His Mother, had not forgotten His words, and her superhuman confidence was doubtless the cause of the atmosphere of peace that surrounded her.

Susanna's joy blurred the memory of her former sorrow, which already seemed unaccountable to her. Why had she wept like those that are without hope? Why had she sought among the dead Him who was living?

Alive! Yes, alive.

The word caused her whole being to quiver. She had not fully understood until now. The blessed truth had touched only the fringe of her soul. Her recent sorrow struggled with her present transports and gave way only gradually, as the fogs of night were melting into gold away over the barren plain.

What had she said at the foot of the Cross? What snatches of psalms were those which then seemed a torture and a mockery?

"The Lord is a living God. . . . He cometh. . . . He hath delivered me. Unto Him will I sing."

How true, how wonderful were these words! They were His very words!

Everything was singing now—angels and flowers and birds in the sunshine. But what were songs to her! She hurried after the women, her thoughts centred on Galilee where she would see Him. The joy of nature did not stay her any more than the songs of the angels, but she silently blessed the Lord who was faithful to His word and generous in His gifts, and who pays heed to our prayers beyond our wildest expectations.

With half-closed eyes and heart afire she made her way along the road between its borders of cactuses and wild fig-trees. The holy women were either talking of their happiness or silent in their fright.

Steps were heard up the road. . . .

Suppose she saw Him, how could she tell Him all she felt? Suppose she saw Him only for an instant, what was the chief prayer she wanted to make? What was it she wanted to know? What was His will for her? How often during those past few days she had longed just to catch a glimpse of Him, to know that He was alive! And now He *was* alive! . . . Susanna now felt within her that thirst and hunger which an eternity can but sharpen and only an eternity can appease.

With her whole soul she invoked Him, the Master of her soul. She would tell Him all her cruel doubts and her fearful suspense! But might she not make a mistake? Perhaps she did not herself know how far she had given way, and how far she had been faithful?

What matter? He knew all that. He

could read her thoughts. Her soul was open before Him—all her weaknesses, her faults, and her unspeakable love. He saw it all; He read the secrets of her being; He knew all better than any weak words of hers could express. She was glad of that. . . . So she would say nothing when she saw Him. She could say nothing to Him. When words become necessary, how poor a friendship has grown!

Susanna's soul took refuge away in secret places where sight and hearing are not of the body, and where the invisible becomes perceptible and near.

The footsteps on the roadway were drawing nearer. . . .

Would He speak to her? He held in His hands the secret of her life, and His words were always so sweet. John had remembered many of them that night after the Supper.

"Abide in my love." If she dared, she would ask Him to say those words to her. Once when she saw Him, He had said to her . . .

But she was so very young then.

Then? Why that was only a few weeks since! But life is not measured by time alone. For life begins only when we meet Him, and so much love and sorrow had come since then that it seemed to her as if centuries had rolled by.

Doubtless now He would prefer to be silent, and tell her nothing of the future. Such was His custom: "Be not solicitous; for your Father knoweth of what you have need."

And she would understand. She would follow His loving providence all her days; she already loved what He loved, and what she thought that He willed—the pure whiteness of the lilies and the joyous mirth of the birds. He would teach her to love what was difficult, if ever He wished her to do what was difficult. She had no fears. . . . Afraid of Him? Could anything be more impossible?

Why was her soul troubled while enraptured, as she realized those footsteps approaching her at the bend of the road?

The holy women had halted; and, before ever she raised her eyes, she knew that Jesus

was there, and that the shadow of the Holy One was upon her.

The women threw themselves at His feet, and adored Him glorified and radiant in His white robes. The veil of His flesh hardly concealed the Godhead which none might here see and live. To those kneeling women He spoke saying: "Fear nothing. Go ye and tell the brethren."

Susanna felt He was calling her, as He raised His hand in benediction; and her rapt soul took refuge in Him as the swallows seek shelter in the clefts of the rocks.

He had said: "Abide in Me"; and as she had longed, she heard His words in the mysterious silence of her heart. He did not say "Go," but "Abide."

And she surrendered herself completely to her joy,—that joy which abides while the rarest delights of earth flit quickly by, leaving behind a train of endless regrets.

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